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THEORY

As a result of the above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. The more the perceived effort of the subject increases, the more the perceived exertion increases.

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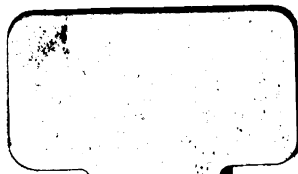
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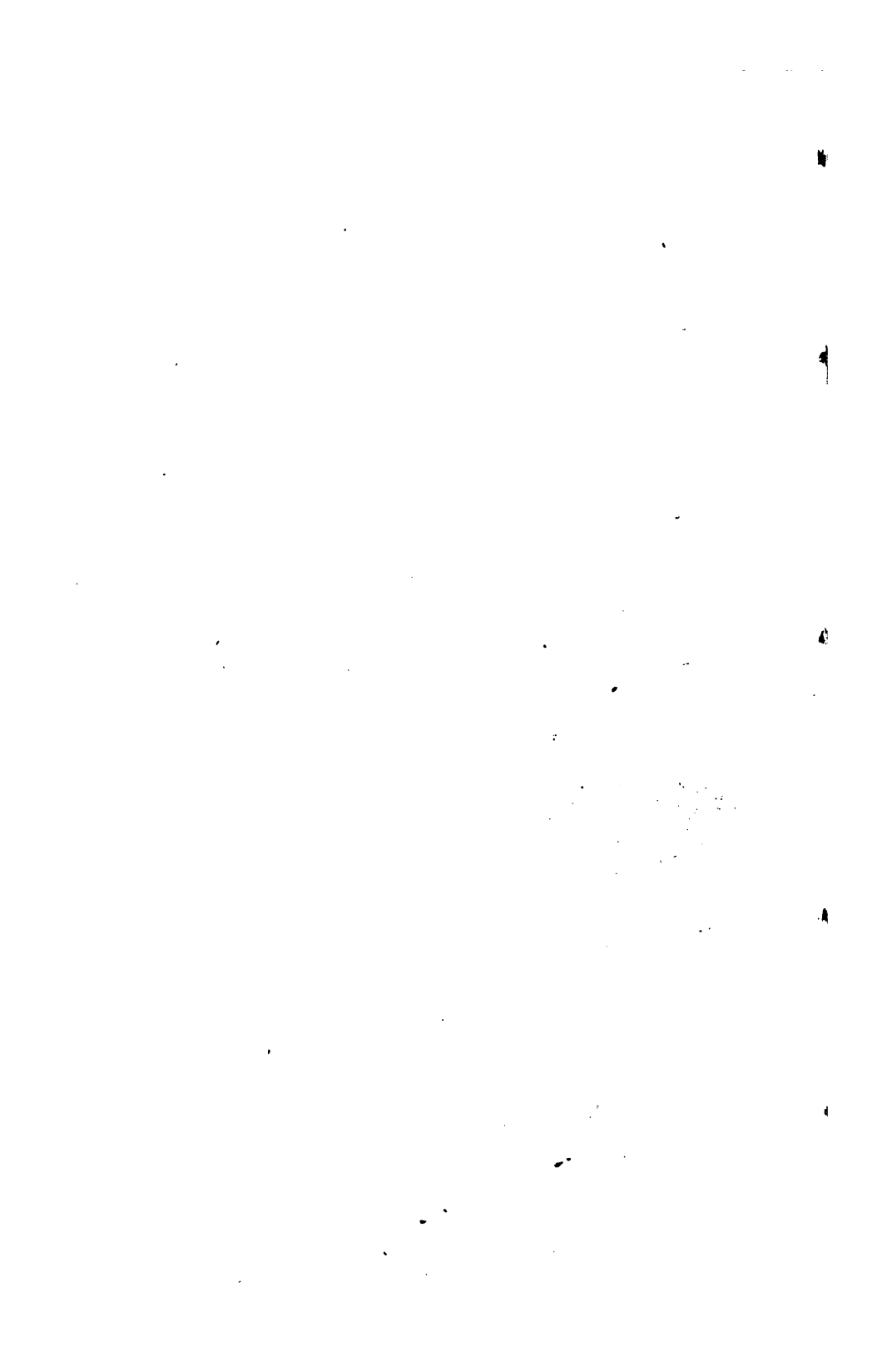


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FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.



FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

A Tale of the Indian Mutiny.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS,"
"SECOND TO NONE," ETC.



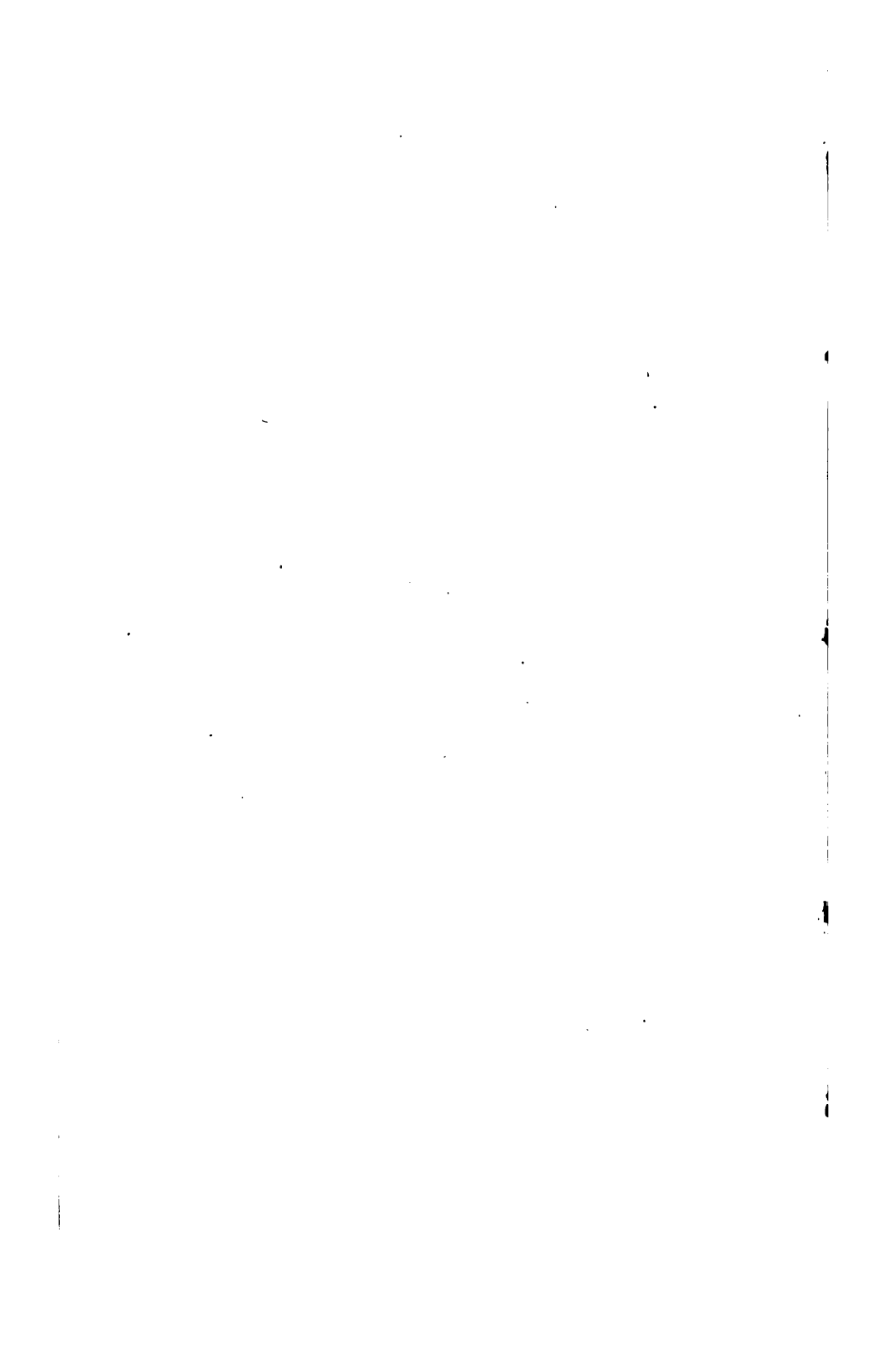
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VOL. I.

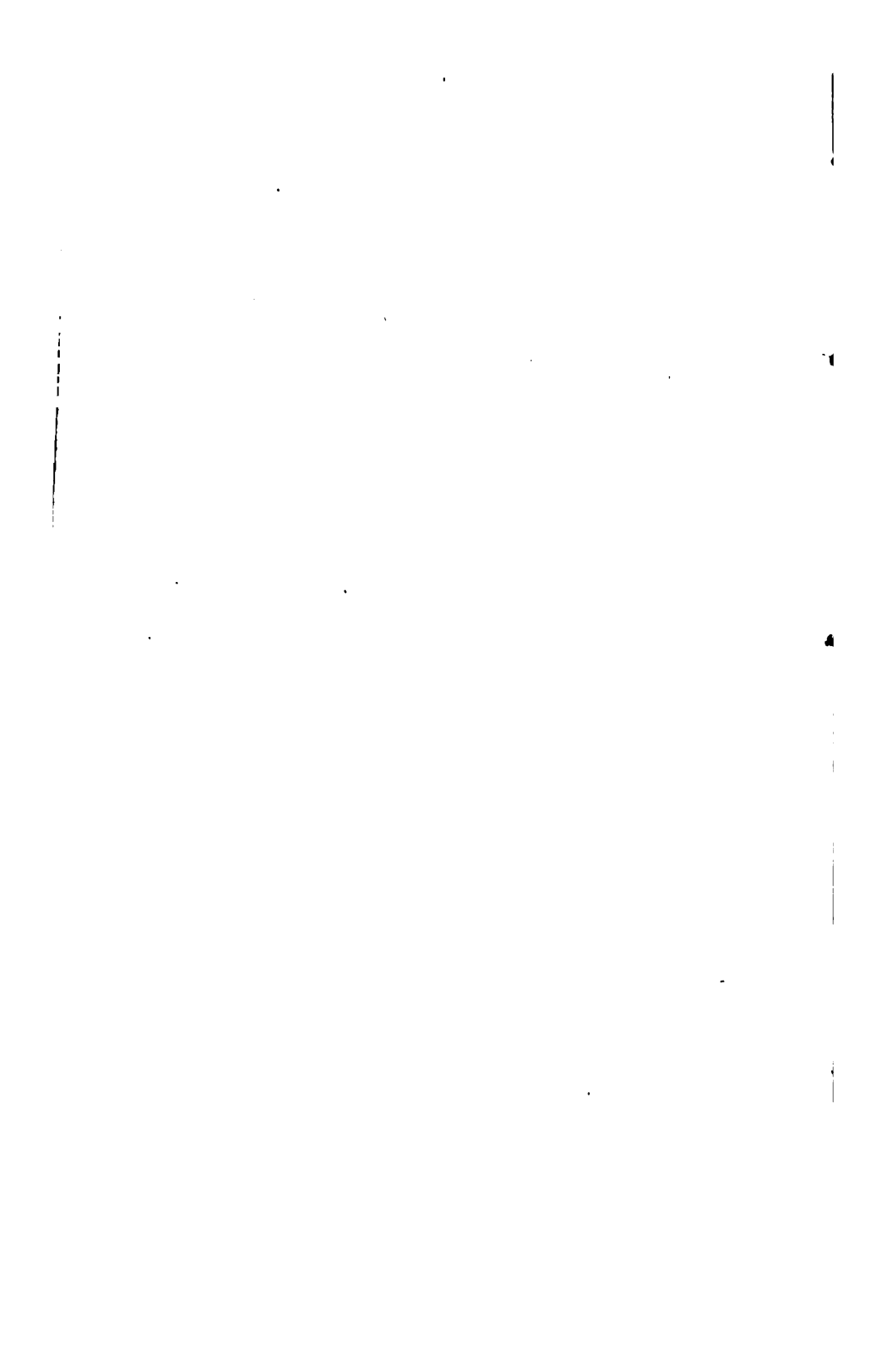
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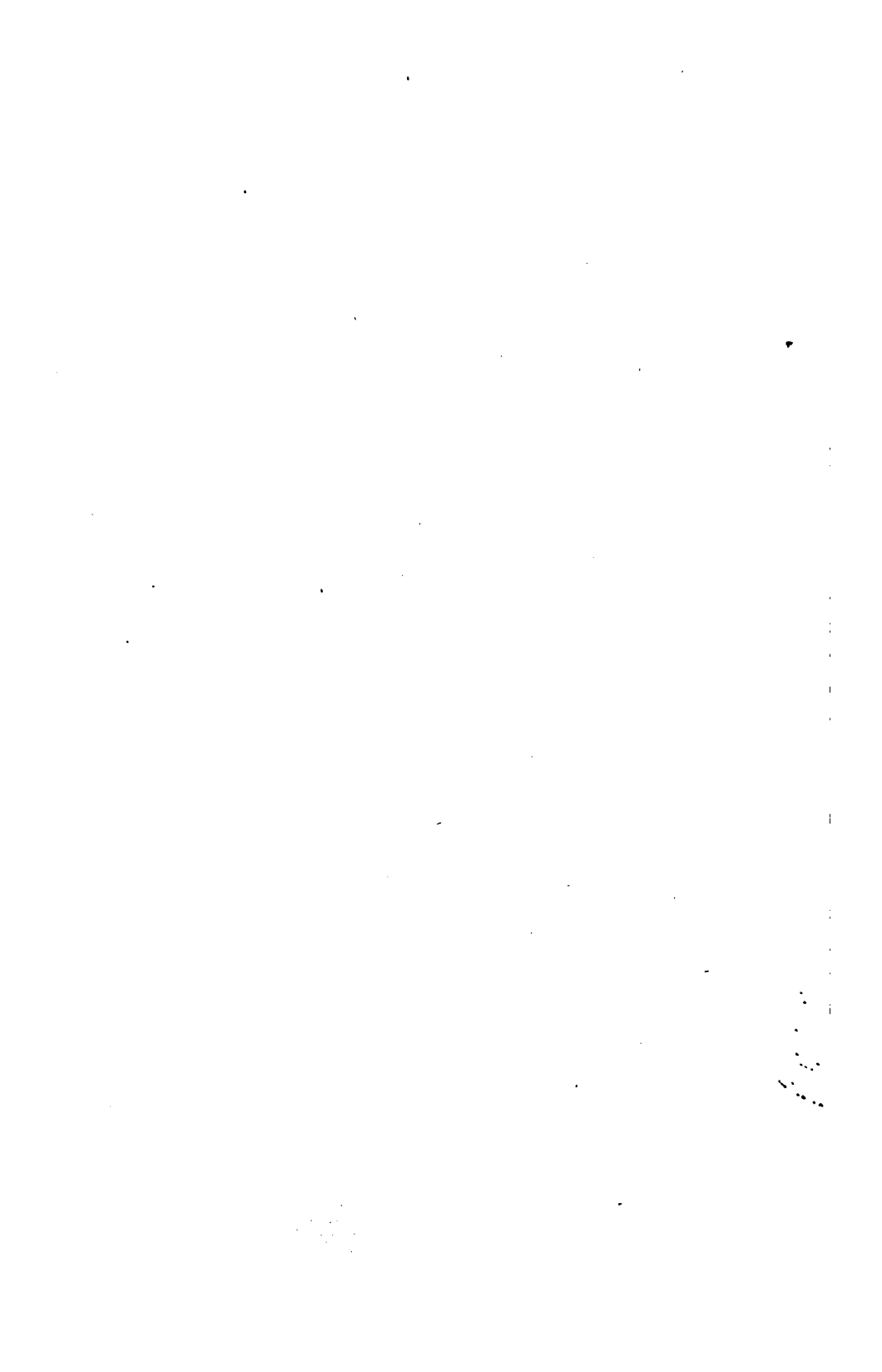


TO
GENERAL SIR WILLIAM KNOLLYS, K.C.B.,
COLONEL OF THE 62ND REGIMENT,
COMPTROLLER OF THE HOUSEHOLD TO H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES,
THIS STORY OF THE INDIAN MUTINY
Is Inscribed,
AS A MEMORIAL OF REGARD AND ESTEEM.



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FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

JACK HARROWER'S BUNGALOW.

"AND she was actually shot by Rudkin's side, you say, Mellon?"

"Shot dead, Jack, by those scoundrels, just as the Colonel drove his buggy, with the horse at full speed, through the cantonment. It was a miracle that he escaped, for the sepoys opened a cross fire on them!"

"Poor woman! In another month, she would probably have been a mother—it is a horrible episode!"

"There will, no doubt, be an awful row about those greased cartridges as the niggers call them; and we are only at the beginning of a very ugly business."

"A thorough Englishman, Mellon, you stigmatise them all as niggers, from the King of

Delhi, down to a Calcutta porter," said the other with a smile.

The speakers were John Trevanion Harrower, or, as he was more generally called, Jack Harrower, a captain of the Cornish Light Infantry, and his visitor, Rowley Thompson Mellon, a lieutenant of the Bengal Fusileers, who were both stationed at Delhi in the memorable year of the Sepoy Revolt; the first indications of which they were discussing through the pleasant medium of brandy and iced soda water, together with a box of cheroots, while the long, hot hours of an Indian April night stole on, and the scent of the orange blossoms and of the tuberose in "the Sahib's" little garden stole through the venetian blinds on the soft and ambient air.

Both were good-looking young Englishmen, tolerably acclimatized, having long since got past the prickly heat, the curse of the boyish blood in India, and both were attired in white linen trousers and jackets, the buttons of which alone indicated anything regimental.

Old friends and college chums at home, they had been rivals as prime bowlers and stroke oars at Eton and Cambridge; but Jack Harrower, the senior in years, was the taller, stronger, and, in aspect, perhaps, the manlier of the two, being close on six feet, with a compact head, closely

shorn, curly dark hair, and straight, handsome features.

A good judge of horses and wine, with a steady hand at billiards, a firm seat in crossing the stiffest hunting country, he could ride straight as an arrow to hounds, pot a tiger from a howdah, or hurl a hogspear with any man in British India. A popular fellow wherever he went, Jack was always employed to scheme out hunting and picnic parties; could choose the right sort of men for the one and the gayest girls for the other, improvising a towel for a tablecloth, palm leaves for dishes, and palanquin and carriage cushions for seats if necessary, and shady places for flirting *al fresco*. While totally destitute of vanity or Dundrearyism, he continued to be one of the leading men in Bengal society, where, from their scarcity, ladies are really objects of interest, beyond what the untravelled European can conceive.

Such was Jack Harrower, whose name appeared in the army list, with the enigmatical letters *p.s.c.* after it,* and who bore on his square open chest the medals for the battle of Goojerat and the campaign of the Sutledge, for Jack was past thirty, and began to reckon himself "somewhat of a fogie," though he conveniently removed that climacteric further off, as time went on.

* Passed Staff College.

His friend Rowley Thompson Mellon (Thompson with a *p*, as he always took particular care to insist) was somewhat more of a dandy than Jack ; he had his light brown flyaway whiskers cultivated to the longest extent, bandolined his mustache even when the thermometer was 100° in the shade, and always wore the smartest of light cork helmets with a bright blue veil round it.

“Yes,” said Mellon, after a pause, during which the mahogany-visaged kitmutgar, or native servant, in obedience to a sign, refilled their glasses with foaming soda water dashed with brandy, “there will, ere long, be a dreadful shindy in John Company’s *cutchery* (office) ; I can see the storm brewing and darkening.”

“But tell me this over again, Mellon,” said Harrower, as he stretched himself on the long cane easy chair, with a leg over each arm thereof ; “by Jove, I don’t quite take it all in yet.”

“What ?”

“This story about Rudkin and his wife.”

“It was at Barrackpore, twenty-four miles from Calcutta, on the 29th of last month, that, as Captain Douglas of the Delhi palace guard informed me, a sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry—a wretch named Mungal Pandey, drunk with bang and maddened by hempseed soaked in intoxicating drugs, loaded his musket and swaggered

about in front of the lines, uttering uncouth yells and seditious cries. The adjutant and sergeant-major attempted to seize and disarm him, but were both severely wounded, while the whole regiment looked on, sullenly or passively, and, no doubt, approvingly. Colonel Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, driving through the Cantonment with his wife by his side, was fired on from the hedge of a compound, and the shot killed her. That shot was fired by Mungal Pandey, whose name is now bestowed upon every mutineer."

"Hush, Mellon—my kitmutgar is a brother of that fellow in the 34th, he is named Ferukh Pandey."

"Then I would set Mr. Ferukh Pandey adrift at once."

"For his brother's crime? Oh no, Mellon; that would scarcely be just; but go on—what followed?"

"Well, the Queen's 53rd and 84th, a battery of light guns and three native corps were speedily on the ground. Mungal Pandey was hanged without much ceremony, together with the native officer who was in charge of the quarter-guard, and all the men of the mutinous regiment in Barrackpore were disbanded, stripped of their uniforms and turned adrift. But they are now spreading themselves like fire-brands through the upper provinces, accusing the Feringhees of

seeking to destroy their caste, through the use of greased cartridges; they inoculate with a spirit of mutiny the sepoy wherever they go, and after that mysterious distribution of chupaties, and other manifestations, such as those at Berhampore and elsewhere, it seems to me, that we Europeans have a volcano under our feet."

Lying back in his cane easy chair, with a cheroot between his fingers, and watching the smoke, as it curled from his thick dark mustaches towards the great dingy punkah that swung to and fro overhead, Jack Harrower made no immediate reply. He seemed lost in thought.

"I suppose," said he, after a pause, "that now since his poor wife is gone, Mark Rudkin will be offering himself again to Lena Weston."

"I don't think so, even with all his d—d impudence," replied Mellon colouring; "besides, the girl wouldn't have him now."

"Don't be too sure of that, Rowley; to my own sorrow, I know that she loved Rudkin very deeply."

"Unluckily for the harmony of creation," says some one, 'wise men do not always fall wisely in love.'"

"But I am not a wise man, Mellon, and never set up for being one. Odd, isn't it, that you and I, Rowley, who are such old friends, college

chums, and all that, should have fallen in love with two sisters, those Weston girls—eh?”

“Better that we fell in love with two, than both have been spooney on *one*.”

“That might not have mattered much, so far as *I* have been concerned, if I were to have no better luck than I have had with Lena—”

“And after her preference for that fellow Rudkin, to be jilted by him after all!”

“It was a shameful business, Rowley, and in the old duelling days, I would have paraded Rudkin at twelve paces for that very act—by Jove I would!—for Lena had no brother to act for her, and her father, as a clergyman, was debarred from doing so.”

“A very paradoxical proceeding that would have been on your part, Harrower, to fight a fellow for *not* marrying the girl you were in love with, and so extinguishing all hope for ever in your heart.”

“Hope?” exclaimed Jack, taking a long and vicious pull at his cheroot, and then flinging it out on the verandah; “I never had much of that. Oh Rowley, I always envied the even tenor of your success with her sister Kate; and Kate, though I loved Lena, is perhaps the prettiest girl of the two.”

“Well, we are engaged of course, and all that

sort of thing," drawled Mellon slowly; "but the old Doctor won't hear of our marriage, till I get another step in the regiment, or my uncle, in the Opium Department, comes down with something handsome in the way of rupees. He has long since discovered that he has a liver and is as yellow as a buttercup; but he prefers to lead the life of a Sybarite in a house like a palace at Garden Reach, to aiding the matrimonial views of his nephew. I have some expectations at his demise—three thousand a year in India Stock and other securities—not that I wish him to die, even to gain Kate Weston—God forbid!"

And now there was a pause, during which Rowley Mellon began to hum his favourite ditty, "The Bengal Fusiliers."

"When I first began to love Lena and to drift so pleasantly from mere flirtation into a serious attachment," said Harrower thoughtfully, "when I used to tangle her crotchet and twiddle the bodkins and wools in her workbox in the little drawing room at Thorpe Audley, I little thought that we should be on such odd terms in India—in India of all places of the world—I, a rejected lover—a dangler—a moonstruck fool! Here, I thought, she would have been my wife, or *his*—and yet she is the wife of neither."

"When she refused you and accepted Rudkin,

the Colonel was in desperate money difficulties ; even a court-martial hung over him ; so he married the rich widow of the Sudder Judge to free him from all his troubles. Lena knew that, and so she forgave him."

"And still more readily will she forgive him now that he is wealthy and free—free to choose again," said Harrower bitterly, as he gnawed his mustache ; "but she was my first love, Rowley, and she shall be my last one !"

"Don't talk stuff, Jack."

"I swear it to you, Mellon !"

"First ?" repeated the other incredulously.

"Truly so."

"Was there not something in that story of the pretty Hindoo girl ?"

"Curse the story and the storyteller ! through it, and Rudkin's art, I first lost Lena Weston. But after all that has passed, if she should be mean enough to marry that fellow, now that he is a widower—"

"Nay, that will she never do ; Madelena is a girl of high spirit," interrupted Mellon, emphatically.

"We shall see ; but as Ninon de l'Enclos asks, 'what mole can be so blind as a woman in love ?' "

"Then, Jack, there was that devil of a scrape

you fell into, at Chatham, with old Woodby, the Commandant of the Dépôt Battalion."

"Stuff, Mellon—how can you talk so?"

"Aha—about visiting his young and pretty wife, to whom you were perfectly unknown, while he was absent on a court-martial at Woolwich."

"Some day I shall explain that affair, for I fear an exaggeration of the story served to blacken me in the eyes of Lena Weston."

"You have a luck for falling into such scrapes," continued Mellon, laughing.

"Have, Rowley! say had—I'm a new man now," said Harrower, with a pleasant smile, for his old friend could not provoke him. "I had not forgotten Lena, as you know well, but had learned to be content, while she was no other man's wife, (for I still hoped against hope) till destiny or the devil sent me up here, on detachment from Lucknow, and then the old flame was fanned anew, by the sight of her—and more than all, by the mere sound of her voice."

"She often speaks of you, and always kindly, Jack."

"God bless her for that, anyway!" said Harrower, in a thick voice, while his eyes brightened.

"Well, but now—"

"To-morrow I'll ride into Delhi, try my luck once more, and end the matter at once. Of

course, you see the Weston girls every day—but don't say that I'm coming."

"As you please; but now I must be off, Jack—a nip of brandy, and then hey for the road. England expects every man to do his duty, so mine is to mount guard at the Cashmere gate to-morrow with some of the 74th—an infernal bore! Tiff with me in passing—my cook is a capital hand at curry-puffs. I'll try and drop into Weston's about tea-time, if I can leave the guard in charge of the Soubadar. What howling is that—a jackal, eh?"

"No—a beastly old Fakir or Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, outside the gate of the compound, half buried in the earth and yelling for alms, from the Faithful and the Feringhees alike. Take my pistols with you in the buggy and look well to the caps."

"Thanks—another weed, and then I'm off like a bird."

Their parting words were now varied by a little talk about the black mare which Mellon had entered for the Planter's Plate at Sonapore, and the heavy books said to have been made up by Pat Doyle of the Fusiliers, Frank Temple of Jack's regiment, and other sporting men, on the running for the Delhi cup, till Ferukh Pandey, (who was *supposed* to be totally ignorant of the tragic fate of

his brother, the late Mungal Pandey, though it had been all detailed to him by the Dervish outside) with slimy and slavish politeness, and with cringing air and gleaming eyes, came to announce that "Mellon Sahib's buggy was at the gate of the compound, together with his cloak, as the dew was falling."

In another minute Rowley Mellon was gone, and in the clear air of the lovely Indian night, Harrower could hear him singing cheerily as he whipped his high-stepping horse, through the lines, a verse of an old Indian mess-room song.

"Assemble, comrades, round the cot,
Bencoolen's nectar foams ;
What though a foreign clime's our lot,
Though severed from our homes—
Shall soldiers trifling ills deplore,
Give way to idle fears ?
No ! fill the glass and toast our corps,
The Bengal Fusileers !"

CHAPTER II.

THE VANISHED YEARS.

HARROWER's bungalow, like all the rest in the cantonment, stood within a green compound of three grassy acres or so, enclosed by a thick hedge of prickly pears, where snakes and jackals lurked. Built of brick, and coated with white chunam, it consisted of one story, had been handed over from captain to captain successively for several years, and was now in a very dilapidated state, as what bungalow is not in an Indian cantonment? A verandah surrounded it, and there by day and night might be seen squatted a miserable, lean, and almost naked wretch, whose shrunk form seemed to be cut out of the darkest mahogany, tugging monotonously at the cord of the punkah, which passed through a hole in the wall, communicating with the sleeping apartment of Harrower Sahib.

The latter's sitting-room and its appurtenances

had all the cobwebby, ricketty, and shabby air peculiar to the military bungalow. The table, minus a cloth, was usually strewn with empty soda-water flasks, amid which stood a bottle of cognac and a Cawnpore cigar case, for the use of chance visitors; there, too, lay a few dog-eared volumes, of the "Railway Library," though no locomotive had as yet sounded its whistle in the Upper Provinces, save a few miles above Allahabad; and on a side table lay the remainder of Jack's literary property, Army Lists, "Field Exercise for the Infantry," "The Articles of War," &c.; with a brace of revolvers, and hunting whips, flasks, and spurs.

In one corner stood a couple of Regulation swords; in another were a double-barrelled rifle and hog-spear. A few water-colours of English scenery, left by a predecessor, who died of jungle fever, were nailed on the walls, and though faded and fly-blown, they were full of home and home memories of dear old England, that was more than fifteen thousand miles away.

A photographic album, with the treasured likenesses of old friends, Eton companions, and college chums, lay on the side table—poor sun pictures, now sorely faded in the land of the sun; but in Jack's bullock trunk were similar memorials, of "the loved, the lost, the distant, and the

dead," that, as he said, "were too sacred for every fellow's inspection and off-hand criticism."

Such, with a few locks of hair, some grey and white, dry and withered, are generally the most valued household lares of the military exile in the East; and in that same baggage-box Jack Harrower kept his mother's farewell gift—a Bible, with her maiden name in it—for it had been a gift to her from his father, in the days of their courtship.

He and she were lying side by side in their graves now, under the shadow of an old English church, far, far beyond the sea. Harrower was usually a devil-may-care kind of fellow; yet often in his tent, on the slopes of the Himalayas, and in camps by the Jumna and Ganges, had he looked at the signature and date—*Mary Trevanion*, 18...—and it seemed to him that the period looked old, very old, and the name odd, very odd, for he had never known her but as his doting and devoted mother.

Little knew Jack that the treacherous Ferukh Pandey, his native kitmutgar, had in secret overhauled and appraised the contents of his entire baggage, looking upon each and all as his own lawful spoil, when the time that *was coming*, arrived!

Harrower had spent a dashing military life in India, and had gained more than one medal in the

campaign, under Lord Hardinge, against the Sikhs. He was strong in frame, cool in head, and rather fancied himself a thorough soldier and man of the world now; yet he lingered in his chair long after his friend's departure, and gazed listlessly through the open window, to where the distant groves of teak and poplar tree rose darkly against the clear blue sky of night, and where the red fire-flies were flashing in and out among the slender shafts of the graceful bamboos, while sad thoughts of home, and old home memories, stole over him—memories of the happiness and the hope that once grew side by side with his young love—growing but to fade and die, even as green spring fades into mellow summer, and the summer, with all its glory, yields at last to winter.

How much in all his fate and relations of life had time, and death, and distance changed!

"There are a thousand thoughts lying within a man that he does not know, till he takes up the pen to write," says Thackeray; "so the heart is a secret place even to him, or to her, who has it in his own breast."

Jack sighed amid his reverie, and mechanically helped himself to a "night-cap," from the brandy bottle; and though drowsy, and made more so by the soothing effects of the hookah, to which he now resorted, by the monotonous swinging of the

punkah overhead, and the hum of insects among the shrubs without, his thoughts were far away in England.

“How dreary it seems to look back over the long vanished years,” he pondered; “vanished for ever—less in the vastness of eternity than a raindrop in the ocean, and yet those years were my all of happiness!”

Far away in memory's eye he seemed to see a green and lovely English landscape, the upland slopes dotted with white sheep, or rich with golden grain, amid which rose the white tower of the old village church of Thorpe Audley, the landmark of that peaceful district for more than eight centuries—yea, ever since the Saxon archers bent their bows in vain at Hastings. The song of the thrush and the robin seemed to come from the beech and privet hedgerows, and the masses of dark green ivy that shaded the venerable arch of the Lichgate. Beyond was a stile, in the low churchyard wall. How well he knew every step of it, spotted with russet lichens and emerald moss! He could remember the graves, too, that lay beyond it, and the old church porch, with its stone seats, where the old and weary rested on Sundays, with its carved gurgoyles and quaint faces of dragons and wyverns. There he could see two figures, two lovers, whose favourite trysting

places were that arched porch and time-worn stile.

They were Madelena Weston and himself.

The whole memory was complete, even to the *ting-tang* of the old village clock, overhead. So thus, in fancy—in a waking dream—was Harrower at home again. “Home always means England,” says a writer, truly; “nobody calls India home—not even those who have been here thirty years or more, and are never likely to return to Europe; for they always speak of England as *home*.” . . .

And with these thoughts, all freshly conjured up by Mellon’s visit and the tidings he had brought of the tragedy at Barrackpore, memories of his love when it was in the flush of his success with Lena, stole over him, and poor Jack Harrower became very sad indeed.

He retraced all the progress of that early passion, and its prosperity too, in Lena’s quiet and secluded English home; their meetings by the old church stile, their botanical excursions among the old chalk cliffs, the limestone quarries, and among the green lanes, where the pear, the plum, and the apple tree entwined their branches overhead—happy, happy hours, till the time came of his rivalry with Mark Rudkin, then a dashing Light Dragoon, fresh from the terrors of the Khyber Pass, the glories of Sale’s campaign in Afghanistan, and later achievements—an officer higher in rank,

and, in some respects, more winning in manner than himself.

Then came the memory of their quarrel, and the bitterness of his rejection—his rejection for a rival, in whose favour he was compelled to quit England and return to India.

There a letter from Mellon informed him that Miss Weston had been deceived, jilted after all, as we have already related, and the story filled him with honest indignation; he felt no ungenerous triumph, but genuine pity for Lena.

Subsequent to all this, he had met her once on the course at Calcutta, for by a strange arrangement of fate, her father, the old Rector of Thorpe Audley, had fallen into such monetary difficulties, that he was glad to accept a Charge at Delhi, through the interest of his old friend, the Bishop of Calcutta.

Now they were all in India, and Rudkin was once more a free man; and from the compulsory or selfish motives of his marriage to the elderly widow, Harrower could not doubt but that the Colonel loved Lena still, and might remember that she was yet to be wooed and won.

As this idea occurred to him, he gave a nervous start, and tossed away the amber mouth-piece of his hookah, muttering—

“I'll not give Rudkin a chance of her again, if

I can help it ; I'll ride over to-morrow, seek an interview, and propose for her a second time ; she can but refuse me—refuse me, as she did before,” he added, in a whisper.

Fondly memory went over all their intercourse in past years, and carefully was every token, instance, glance, and expression of esteem, regard, and of love, gleaned up and remembered now, to make an encouraging and comprehensive whole by which Harrower sought to convince himself that she loved him—that she *once had loved him*, after all !

Was this really true, or was the emotion of her heart “ but a girl's fancy for the first man who had roused her vanity, and flattered her self-esteem ? ”

There had been times, even during the pleasant days of that happy summer at Thorpe Audley, when Harrower feared it was so, and strove to thrust the suspicion aside as unworthy of Lena and himself ; but, alas ! when Rudkin came, all his fears of her fickleness became verified ; doubt became conviction ; and yet he loved Lena Weston still !

It did occur to him that there was a lack of pride in all this ; but love and angry pride go seldom hand in hand.

“ To-morrow, then ! Pray Heaven I may

achieve something more than teasing Polly, and playing cats-cradle with her, as I used to do at Thorpe Audley."

Polly was Lena's youngest sister. Poor Jack! in England six years before, he had been wont to put Polly on his knee, and toy and play at cats-cradle with her, and admire the delicacy and dexterity of her soft little fingers. He forgot that Polly was now sixteen, with golden hair and laughing blue eyes—a tiny yet lovely Hebe, who was the admiration of all the ensigns and cadets on the station, and her delightful fairy fingers were meant for better things than cats-cradle now.

"By Jove, I'm growing a fogie, and Polly is almost a woman!" thought Harrower, when the conviction that six years had elapsed since those sunny days forced itself upon him; "and now to bed—hallo, Ferukh Pandey, bring the chowry."

"Yes, master; bed and chowry ready," replied his copper-coloured valet, who was attired in spotless white—turban, jacket and trousers.

The article referred to, was a switch, like a pony's tail tied to the end of a drumstick, and with this, Ferukh proceeded with great energy to beat and whisk the inside of the muslin curtains for nearly five minutes, so that not a mosquito or cockroach might remain between the roof and the hard mattress.

On his old and worm-eaten bedstead—old and worm-eaten, for the proverbial splendours of the Orient rarely find their way into the military bungalow,—a bedstead in which scores of subalterns had reposed in succession, when halting on their march through the upper provinces—tucked in with white mosquito curtains, in his night-shirt and linen drawers, the usual sleeping costume in India, Harrower spent most of the night in tossing to and fro, feverishly panting and perspiring, thinking of Lena Weston, her face and eyes, her voice, and the old church porch at home; and framing again and again the fashion in which he would break the object of his mission to her.

Then he would dose off for a minute or two to waken up with a nervous start and swear at the punkah-driver, who, squatted on his knees like a Mexican idol, had dosed off to sleep—happy fellow, in the cooler verandah outside, heedless alike of serpents and tigers, and the cries of the jackal in the prickly pear hedge of the compound.

Close by his bed, lay Harrower's sword and hunting whip, for long before the terrors of the great revolt, Europeans seldom reposed in India without having a weapon at hand, for there had always been Thugs, naked thieves with their skins well oiled, hyænas, tree tigers, perhaps a cobra

four feet long, and other visitors, which, as the doors and windows are generally open, were apt to furnish the unconscious sleeper with a little nocturnal excitement.

Many a poor "white sahib" slept soundly that night beside his wife and little ones, all unaware that the mysterious chupaties were being distributed from hand to hand by hundreds of thousands: that the Hindoos whispered of Vishnu, and prayed to snakes and the monkey god, even as the Moslems were doing to Mahomet, for the blood of the European and the Eurasian alike; and that roving fakirs, active messengers, and disbanded sepoy of all kinds were stealthily gliding over India, stirring up the native troops to a revolt and general massacre; and that in the adjacent bungalows, the cavalry sowars, the artillery gholandazees, and the privates of the infantry, were plotting, planning, and arranging the terrible scheme, by which each regiment might murder the Feringhee officers of the others, and seize upon their wives and daughters as lawful loot or spoil, and yet, as they phrased it, "all remain true to their *salt*!"

CHAPTER III.

THE CANTONMENT.

HARROWER, after having brought his courage to the sticking point, and subdued every emotion of pride, felt his heart fail him, when thinking over his intention of formally visiting Miss Weston next morning ; so much of happiness, and so much of disappointment and future bitterness depended on the issue of an interview, after the lapse of so much time, and after all that had passed between them, when he was home on leave in England ; but he had not long given him for reflection, for after his snatches of sleep, he had barely enjoyed being sluiced in his brick-work bath by the hands of Ferukh Pandey—who poured over him in succession, the contents of several jars of red clay, which had been cooling all night in the verandah (if cooling it could be called), when visitors arrived in the morning, which in polite Indian society means the time about which

the later folks of the western world are going to bed.

He was just beginning to dawdle over the wing of a fowl and a piece of toast,—prepared for his early breakfast by Ferukh,—when his subaltern, Frank Temple, and Patrick Doyle, of the Bengal Fusileers, dropped in from the neighbouring bungalows to talk over “this ugly business at Barrackpore,” and to swear at the Pandies—as all now began to term the discontented sepoys.

Less in love than Harrower—or more probably not in love at all,—they did ample justice to the breakfast mess, which Ferukh prepared for them, and which consisted of a pyramid of boiled rice with butter, some green chillis, fish and cayenne, all mashed up together ; and Jack, as he observed them, envied alike their appetites and their lightness of heart, for both were gay and heedless young fellows, very good-looking, and perfectly aware of that circumstance.

Though they were to act important parts in the events of the future, there was nothing very striking about those two officers ; both were pleasant, off-hand, gentlemanly fellows, like scores of others to be met with in the mess bungalows of the three Presidencies, whether Queen’s or Company’s service.

Frank Temple was a lisping and somewhat

affected English dandy; Patrick Morris Doyle was a powerfully built, black whiskered, keen—some said wild—eyed Irishman, with a fine, deep, mellow, and rolling voice, which savoured of the brogue chiefly, when he became excited, which his enemies—and they were few—were wont to own, occurred pretty often.

“By the powers, but it *was* hot last night!” said he; “awfully so.”

“Well, that is nothing new in India,” said Harrower.

“Is this fish from the Jumna?” lisped Temple.

“Of course; where else could it come from here? But why?”

“Faith, it’s delicious, old fellow,” interrupted Doyle, with his black whiskers studded with rice; “even the holy trout of Kilgavower couldn’t beat it, I suppose—not that I ever ate of it, thank God, though I have heard of those who tried to do so.”

“What kind of trout was it?” asked Temple, languidly.

“I’m a county Mayo man, though we come of the ould Doyles of Clonmoney in Carlow; why the devil it was called Clonmoney, I don’t know, for it’s mighty little of that commodity we ever had amongst us. Well, I was born near the place where the immortal trout flourished. On

the bank of a secluded rivulet near my father's house, there stands the ruined chapel and the holy well of Kilgavower, in the sanctity of both of which every true Catholic in that part of the country believes; and a famous place Kilgavower was, in the happy ould times, when Malachi wore his collar of gold, and something more, it's to be hoped, for decency's sake. Shortly before I was born, there suddenly appeared in the holy well, a huge trout, swimming about; the devil such another fish was ever seen in the whole county of Mayo, for size, beauty, and sprightliness. It was all the colours of the rainbow, and was marked with the cross, and by St. Peter's thumb to boot. His eyes were like diamonds, and had the power of winking at the girls, when they looked down into the well. All the country people far and near fed the blessed trout with crumbs and oatmeal, till he grew, by the powers, as big as a salmon! Well, there he swam in health and happiness, for many a day, till a Scotch regiment marched through Kilgavower, and that night a certain unholy Presbyterian drummer—a dark dog, he was—fished out the trout, and invited some of his comrades to feast thereon. It died hard, but it sputtered and browned famously in the pan, and the eyes and the teeth of the hungry sawneys watered as they watched it. But

just as it was done to a turn, and ready to be dished, a hand came down the chimney—a long, lean hand and arm, that tossed the fish into the fire, and in a moment it became a black cinder, exactly like the beautiful trout that the fisherman in the Arabian Nights caught in the enchanted pond, and whose miraculous cooking led to the discovery of the young king of the Black Isles, whose nether man, to his great annoyance, was turned into black marble.”

This little Irish anecdote, which Doyle told with a considerable dash of the brogue in his tone, like everything else connected with Europe, was listened to with more attention, than perhaps it merited.

“Have you heard the last news about the Weston girls?” asked Doyle, with a suddenness, that occupied as Harrower’s mind was, gave him a species of galvanic shock.

“News,” he repeated colouring; “no—what news?”

“About Prince Abubeker—the King of Delhi’s son.”

“No—I don’t think you ever get beyond the Arabian Nights, Pat—but what is it?”

“They say, he has sent a Cashmere shawl, a champac necklace set with diamonds, and I don’t know all what, to Miss Weston.”

"Well," said Harrower, with scarcely perceptible irritation, "you, Pat, should be a good authority."

"For what?"

"Gup," was the curt response.

"That's mighty sharp, Jack, being Hindostani for gossip, in other words scandal, and I'm really fond of the Weston girls—that charming little Polly especially."

"It is whispered in Delhi," said Temple, who was a good humoured little fellow, and whose lisp was partly affected, "that the Princes Mirza Mogul and Abubeker, with all their *suwarri* at their heels, always contrive to pass or follow the Weston family on the course."

"A couple of d—d impudent niggers!" said Harrower angrily.

"But of course that means nothing."

"Of course not," added Harrower, as he viciously bit off the end of a cheroot and prepared to light it; "who were those that rode alongside their carriage yesterday morning?"

"The Princes, I suppose, and Baboo Bulli Sing — that ferocious looking fellow is their shadow."

"No—two ladies mounted on pretty Caubul ponies."

"Oh! two Scotch girls, who have come out to join their uncle, a judge—the Miss Leslies."

"On promotion, of course?"

"Faith, and you may take your oath of that, Jack," said Doyle, "and yet the girls have money in plenty."

"Ah—the overland route rather spoils that sort of thing now," lisped Temple, as he lounged back on a cane easy chair, and prepared a cigar; "so returned goods sometimes find their way back to Bath and Brighton again."

"No other person was with them?"

"Only little Dicky Rivers of the 6th Bengal."

Harrower felt thankful that the newly made widower had not "turned up," as he mentally phrased it, for, in his jealousy and anxiety, he feared that Rudkin might lose no time in making his appearance as a suitor at Delhi, though decency, and the rules of society, even in India, forbade such a proceeding, within so short a time.

"They hinted to me—" Temple was beginning.

"Who?" said Harrower sharply; "the Scotch girls?"

"That they thought the fair Lena roused a little."

"Lena Weston—*gup*, I say—mere *gup* again," replied Harrower, sharply; "there are no fellows in India like the Bengal Fusileers for that, so we of

the Cornish Light Infantry, must beware of it as a besetting sin, Temple, it shews jolly bad taste."

"By my soul, but it's mighty unpleasant and sharp you are, this morning, Jack Harrower," said Doyle, "but it would only be fair if Miss Weston did add to her own natural beauty."

"If possible," interrupted Harrower.

"The odds are much against a girl here after her twentieth year is past; and in a place like Delhi, with a thermometer at 98° or 100° in August, she won't bloom as if in the Ridings of Yorkshire, or on the Wicklow mountains, in Ireland, God bless it!"

"How spooney Rowley Mellon of yours, is on Kate," said Temple, still persisting in a species of messroom gossip, which, as it jarred with his own secret thoughts, made Harrower writhe with impatience; but he kept his countenance admirably, for his thick dark mustache concealed the quiver of annoyance on his short and handsome upper lip, and his clear honest eyes had learned the art of smiling, even when his heart was sore.

The long, hot, Indian day, wore slowly on, after the formula of the early morning parade was over, and Harrower remained in his bungalow, or on the verandah, in his shirt and drawers, dozing, smoking, imbibing bitter beer, and, after he had tossed a novel aside, fancying that he was studying

that polyglot medley called Hindostani, by turning over the leaves of a dictionary.

At last evening came ; he dined early and alone at the nearest mess-bungalow, made a careful toilet and ordered his horse, a command, which set the *bheestie* or water-carrier, the *syce* or grass-cutter, the groom, and a score of other native servants in a state of activity, for no one there performs more than one special piece of work ; but as straws or puffs of smoke will shew how the wind is setting in, indications of the coming storm were visible even within the narrow circle of Harrower's compound ; so studiously sullen and inert were the native servants, and so long did each in succession linger over his hubble-bubble or quid of bang, that an hour elapsed before the horse was accoutred and at the door.

"By Jove, I'll make some of you fellows look alive with my whip, next time I give an order," said Harrower, angrily, as he came forth ; "I say, Ferukh, give that sword-belt a wipe, will you ; it is covered with dust."

"Sword belt leather, sahib ; bullock's leather, perhaps."

"And what the devil if it is ?"

"Unclean animal, master—not good to touch ; and Ferukh Pandey very good caste," replied the valet, salaaming and edging away while putting

his dingy palms together, as the Bengalees generally do, when mildly remonstrating.

“Caste be——” Jack was about to say something very unpleasant, but thinking it not worth while, he whisked the belt with his handkerchief, and buckled it on.

“Low caste—pariah!” muttered Ferukh, with a furtive glance of hate and malice in his glossy black eyes.

Harrover put on his sun-helmet, which had a flap, or fall of white linen that covered his neck and ears, like the caps worn by the Templars of old, and it certainly set off to the best advantage his dark, straight features. He wore a scarlet shell-jacket open, with a light linen vest, and a handsome fellow he looked as he rode away, all unconscious of the strange, malevolent, but very intelligible glances that were exchanged by the copper-coloured inmates of his household, a picturesque looking set of Pandies, mostly clad only with a coarse red cummerbund round the loins, and a white turban, an attire which, if not gaudy, was certainly simple.

Beyond the gate of the compound there still loitered the Dervish Hafiz Falladeen. This creature was one of those fanatical but cunning and sensual religious beggars who are to be found in all parts of India. A filthy orange-coloured shirt

was almost his only garment; his long and dirty grizzled hair was greased and matted, and his tawny face and naked breast were daubed with coarse bright ochre. Round his waist he usually wore a living serpent, of some innocuous species, as a girdle; now it was round his neck, and its sharp head and fiery eyes were visible among the masses of his beard.

Now self-buried to the armpits, he was one of that lazy kind who will sometimes remain near a camp or village for a fortnight, refusing to go away unless well paid for it, and threatening that if they die, their blood will be upon the heads of all who have neglected them, and thus they become a source of terror as well as respect, to the ignorant Mussulmans; but ere long, it was known that the Dervish Falladeen had other objects in the cantonment than the mere collection of alms.

"Master—Sahib, tarry and hear me!" he howled in Hindostani, as Harrower rode past.

"I have heard you and the jackals every night long enough. I can tarry another time," replied Jack.

"You cannot, Sahib—you cannot," cried the Dervish, impetuously.

"Indeed—and why can't I?" asked Harrower, checking his horse for a moment.

"Because time belongs to no man, least of all perchance to you."

"Ah—to whom, then?"

"God and His only Prophet. Is it not written so?—deen! deen!" replied the Dervish, throwing up his arms, "and in their names, I pray you, alms!"

"Canting old humbug!" said Harrower, as he tossed the beggar an anna, or half-rupee, and rode on.

Those who have been stationed at Delhi may remember that the cantonments were on hilly ground, about three or four miles distant from the new city, which could be seen from them, spreading along the right bank of the Jumna, a magnificent city amid a sandy plain, but seated on a range of rocky hills. It was girt by grey granite walls, above which its high minarets and gilded domes towered into the clear unclouded sky; the mighty mosque of Shah Jehan, that rises from a terrace nearly a mile square; the palace of the Mogul Dynasty, with all its towers and battlements; the ruins of the older city far beyond, with the vast dome of Homaïom's tomb, and the enormous column of the Kutub Minar, rising, with all its galleries, to the height of two hundred and fifty feet, covered with arabesques and verses from the Koran: all those

striking features were visible clearly and sharply in the bright splendour of an amber and gold Indian sunset, which threw their purple shadows to a vast distance over the white sandy plain.

“And there is now the home of Lena Weston!” thought Harrower, as his horse picked its way through the cantonments; “how different from the old English rectory of Thorpe Audley, with its Tudor gables and mullioned windows, which I was wont to watch from the Chalk Hills, and think with joy that my heart lay under its quaint roof of yellow thatch, among the green woods of the old Chase. Now—now time, and place, and circumstances are changed indeed! Maria Edgeworth says truly, ‘The romance of real life certainly goes beyond all other romances.’”

In the circle of English home society, a jilted or disappointed man might not return to his fair one, like the moth to the candle, especially after a lapse of years; but circumstanced as Lena Weston and Harrower were—the latter having never ceased to love the former—and being now cast together far, far up-country, in the central provinces of India, the matter was very different, and now his aspirations turned to Lena, as those of a Hindoo to his holy Ganges, or a Mussulman to where Mecca and the Kaaba lie.

A busy scene were those Delhi cantonments

of the 38th, 54th, and 74th Bengal Native Infantry.

The sepoy lines were several streets of huts, formed of bamboos pointed up with mud and thatched with brown straw. On the right and left flanks of these lines were the huts of the soubadar majors and other native officers, with little courts of mud-walls around them; and in these wigwams every sepoy had one apartment, or zenanna, into which no man, save himself—not even the colonel or officer of the day—dared to penetrate, for in it he contrived to seclude together an incredible number of female followers and relations. Amid these lines was the bazaar of each regiment, a large booth crowded by wrangling sutlers, rice-merchants, dealers in shawls, pipes, tobacco, and bang, with jugglers, tumblers, Fakirs, snake-charmers, fortune tellers, and indecent dancers, whose vagaries as a multitude it required all the energies of the provost marshal and the cantonment magistrate to repress.

The brigade had just been dismissed from evening parade, and with shrill shouts, the supple and bony, but ungainly, sepoys were hastening to throw off the already hated tight red coat and pantaloons, and to don their linen drawers and turbans, and fall to cooking their pilaff, which to them is exactly what roast beef is to a Briton, or

to dine on a piece of bread dipped in the nearest water-tank, while swarms of dark-skinned imps, with lean limbs and huge paunches, gamboled about them in utter nakedness.

As Harrower proceeded, he became painfully sensible of being shunned and avoided, as the passers had evidently no desire to accord the salute usually given to an officer.

When crossing the sandy plain that lay between the lines and Delhi, he saw a cloud of dust approaching, and amid it several bright points were glittering. It proved to be the two sons of the old King of Delhi, the Prince Mirza Mogul and his brother Abubeker, accompanied by all their *suwarri*, or retinue. They were seated in a handsome open London-made carriage, surrounded by mounted attendants, all richly clothed, wearing polished helmets, with flaps of chain mail, and armed with glittering spears, tulwars, pistols, and shields, that were covered by silver bosses. Around, and more especially preceding them, was a herd of wild-looking and half naked Indians, shouting their titles with stentorian lungs, and running at full speed to keep pace with the carriage horses.

Amid this singular staff there rode, in his full uniform, Captain Douglas, a Company's officer, a soldier-like man, who held the post of Commandant of the Palace Guard; and by his side

rode Baboo Bulli Sing, the commander of the King of Delhi's native troops, a Mussulman of forbidding and most ferocious aspect.

Harrower checked his horse, and saluted the Princes, who made him a suave and even profound salaam in return, and both of whom he could perceive to be of sinewy and athletic figures, though as *blasé* in bearing as Indian voluptuaries could be. Their eyes black as coal; their complexion pure copper; their lips thick and sensual, fringed by a slight mustache. They wore conical caps, surmounted by white feathers; rich shawls were bound about them by brilliant jewels, and a mass of diamonds, and other precious stones, sparkled in the hilts of the daggers and pistol butts, which were stuck in their gorgeous cummerbunds or cashmere sashes.

"Going into town, Harrower?" asked Captain Douglas, reining in his horse for a moment.

"Yes—to Dr. Weston's; you know him, I think," replied the other, unwittingly revealing somewhat of the thought that was uppermost in his mind.

"Take care, Harrower," said Douglas, laughing; "those girls of his are very pretty, and there is always a certain amount of matrimonial impetuosity among us in India when the thermometer verges on 98°."

"Bah! you forget how long I have been here—and that we were together at Ferozeshah, and on the Sutledge."

"Aye; when so far up country as we are, the male sex always preponderate among Europeans, and a fellow is pretty safe; but take care, Harrower, or you'll get hooked—every one is hooked who sees Miss Weston."

"Indeed—is she so captivating?"

"She is; and she has refused ever so many fellows—Lancers, Hussars, and Infantry men, Queen's service, as well as John Company's, and no end of civilians, since she came here, three years ago—so beware, Jack."

"All right; there is no fear for me," replied Harrower, in the same bantering tone; "though I have heard that to see the Weston girls mounted for an evening ride, with a staff of red-coats and civilians hovering about them, is one of the sights of the place, and quite as stirring as those Delhi Princes make, with all their picturesque rabble. Good-bye—I see that amiable warrior, Baboo Bulli, looking impatiently for you."

They separated with a laughing nod.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WESTONS.

“THESE reported offers may all be garrison *gup*—wretched local gossip ; yet, if so,” thought Harrower, “if true—what could her motive be in systematic refusal ? I was discarded, and Rudkin had married.”

How little could Douglas, as he galloped after the Delhi Princes, know the secret that actually loaded the heart and tongue of him he bantered, and the thoughts that occupied him so much, that he forgot to visit Mellon at the Cashmere Gate, and, like one in a dream, passed along the bustling and crowded streets of the city, and through the Silver Square, as it is named, till he reached the house of Dr. Weston, which was situated within a spacious garden, and close to the bank of the Jumna.

Harrower knew the house well ; he had not been long at Delhi, yet daily had he ridden past

it, in the hope of seeing Lena or some of the family.

It was a stately mansion, with a great number of large windows; the walls and pillars were all of the whitest plaster; a spacious verandah surrounded it, and between the slender columns which supported the latter were large green blinds of split bamboo, to exclude the heat of the sun during noon.

On the balustrade above the cornice a number of crows were perched, and amid them were three great adjutant birds, with long, lean legs, enormous beaks and pouches, dozing in the evening sunshine.

The durwan, or door-keeper, to whom he gave his card, said that—

“The sahib was at home, and the three mem-sahibs too.”

The gong was then banged to announce a visitor.

It sounded odd to hear “the Weston girls” of that quaint old parsonage house at Thorpe Audley spoken of thus, in the capital of the Moguls, by the valet, a black-bearded, red-turbanned, and white-caftaned “Ali Baba,” who salaamed Jack Harrower (through the marble vestibule of the reverend Doctor’s mansion beside the Jumna), and who rejoiced in the name of Assim Alee.

"What effect will the presentation of my card have upon her?"

"*'Captain John T. Harrower,
H.M. Cornish Light Infantry.'*

Will she, or her father, first receive it?" thought he, as he found himself alone in a spacious drawing-room, the lofty windows of which opened to a magnificent garden; "I would almost wish the latter, for I always knew that the good old Doctor really loved me—the son of his old friend."

It is a peculiarity of the human mind, when greatly excited or over-anxious, frequently to remark and remember the veriest trifles, the pattern of a wall-paper or of a carpet; hence, while left to his own reflections for a time in the drawing-room, Harrower fidgeted about with one hand in the hilt of his sword, and his sun-helmet in the other, and took in all its details at a glance or two.

It was spacious, and its smooth white walls were lofty; but their great spaces were broken by numerous large English prints, in satin-wood frames, such as Landseer's "Bolton Abbey in the Olden Time," "Laying down the Law," "Deer-stalking," and so forth, varied by the "Charge of the 16th Lancers at Sobraon," and in a place of honour a portrait of "Victoria the Begum of

England—the Queen of the Feringhees,” as the native servants, not very respectfully, styled Her Majesty.

Between these pictures, and projecting from gilded brackets, were the great conical glass wall-shades, to keep the oil-lamps when lighted from being blown out by the elaborately-moulded and gilded punkah, which hung overhead, with great angular spaces cut out of it, so that it might be swung to and fro at full stretch without sweeping away the crystal chandeliers, which were thriftily shrouded in yellow muslin bags.

Carpets there were none, but matting of the finest kind covered the floor, and all the damask sofas and other furniture were European, and of the most recent fashion, though the ornaments were most of them Oriental; thus China flower-vases, Burmese idols, and Hindoo gods, were plentifully strewn about the marble side-tables, always to the wonder and disgust of the Mussulman kitmutgar, and the ayah, neither of whom believed in graven images as objects of taste.

Harrower bestowed a nervous glance at the card-basket, and another at the music on the open piano—a fantasia of Thalberg’s—dreading to see Rudkin’s name in either place. The fantasia, however, was merely inscribed “Dicky Rivers to his Cousin Polly,” and he saw on the table some

novels of Bulwer's, and others, handsomely bound, and these he remembered to have given to Lena in the vanished times, and their names were still on the fly-leaves.

She had preserved these, at all events—but books are scarcely to be got up country.

Though she can have no home comforts amid all the clumsy and Oriental splendour of India, the English lady must always have her drawing-room, wherein she can show the newest things—brought up country from Calcutta by the steamer as far as Allahabad, or further now by rail—and where she can enshrine, as household gods, the farewell presents given her when she left her happy English home, a weeping and a wedded bride, for a married life of long and splendid exile in the land of the sun.

A silk curtain, which served for a door, suddenly unclosed, and once more Jack Harrower found himself face to face with Lena Weston, who held his card with a somewhat tremulous hand; and the silk drapery with the other.

Honest Jack's heart seemed to leap to his lips as he saw her, yet he made a tremendous effort to appear as calm as—as she did.

Madalena Weston was rather under the middle height; she was entirely dressed in white muslin, without an ornament of any kind, or even a ring

upon her fingers. The muslin dress came close round her slender throat, and the fine form of her white shoulders and taper arms could be seen through its delicate texture. Her face was pale, and her features delicate and regular; her eyes and their lashes were dark, and had a divine softness in their expression generally. The great masses of her hair, which was almost black—the darkest and glossiest brown, at all events—were gathered up and braided smoothly away behind her little white shell-like ears.

Having lost her mother early in life, Madalena had been by force of circumstances compelled to act a maternal part to her younger sisters, and as the mistress of her father's household, and the dispenser of his alms among the poor at Thorpe Audley; she had therefore attained a certain amount of matronly and worldly confidence beyond her years; so now she was to all appearance perfectly calm and collected, before the man whom her reproachful heart told her she had treated cruelly some five years before in England, and whom she well knew, from the information of Rowley Mellon, and others, loved her still!

Yet a keener observer than Jack Harrower might have detected beyond the sweetness of her lovely dark and dove-like eyes a strong expression of combined wonder and perplexity, kindness

and interest, as with smiling and parted lips she held out both her hands to him, and said, with nervous rapidity of utterance—

“Captain Harrower, this is kind of you—most kind—so like you—to find us out; and papa will be so happy to see you again.”

Harrower bowed, muttered some well-bred common-place reply, and merely took her hands in each of his, and retained them for an instant. It was all so different now from *then*.

“How long have you been in Delhi?” she enquired.

“A fortnight—we came up by railway to Agra.”

“A whole fortnight!”

“My company has been going through a course of musketry instruction,” stammered Harrower; “thus every morning has been fully occupied—”

“And the evenings would no doubt be occupied too. Oh! these mess-bungalows and billiard-rooms are great attractions.”

“I was sent up here, I don’t know why, unless to strengthen the garrison, in case of disturbances—the greatest arsenals in India are in Delhi—and—and—I was just able to find you out this evening,” said Harrower, whom her apparent coolness piqued, though almost every evening since his arrival he had ridden past the house at least once.

They seated themselves on opposite sofas, and after a time Lena said, while using a large feather fan, which she took from a table close by—

“It is a pleasant custom this, in India, for strangers to call on the residents, such as we are now; though I fear railways will do away with it.”

“I did not call, Miss Weston, because I thought myself a stranger—but rather as an old friend,” replied Harrower, in a voice that was singularly calm, when the emotion that agitated his broad chest, and made him vibrate in all his stature of six feet, less an inch or so, is considered.

“A stranger! I should think not, my dear Harrower—my valued friend, and the son of my old and valued friend!” exclaimed a cheerful, but familiar voice, while one hand was laid on his shoulder, another clasped his right hand, and he found himself greeted by Dr. Weston, a good specimen of a suave, jolly, and easy-going English churchman, who had found it certainly no small inconvenience, at his years, to uproot all his old-established maxims, plans, and home-comforts, and to quit his snug old parsonage, among its English woodlands, for the office of pastor in the red-hot, scorching City of Delhi, to acquire a taste for curry, chili, and chutnee, and in lieu of the *Times*, to put up with the Bengal *Hurkaru*.

His hair was white as snow now, but his blue eyes were bright and clear, even as those of Kate or Polly, who hurried in to welcome Harrower, and who were both very beautiful girls.

"Ah! Polly, dear—how you have grown!" said Jack.

"Harrower!" exclaimed the lively girl, "dear Jack Harrower, whom we all loved so much at Thorpe Audley! I have not seen you since I gave up wearing short frocks and frilled trousers! How fond you used to be of Lena, and how she blushed when once I caught you kissing her in the shrubbery."

"Polly!" exclaimed Dr. Weston, warningly; for this reminiscence made them all feel uncomfortable, and when Polly began, there was no knowing when she might end, so in the present instance she was not to be put down.

"Dear, dear old Jack Harrower! Oh! this is delightful!" she exclaimed, springing up and kissing him; "I shall never forget how often I have ridden on your head and shoulders at home, in dear England!"

Polly might have blundered out with many other things, had not tea and coffee been announced; and darkness having suddenly set in—as there is no twilight in India—the kitmutgar proceeded to light the lamps in the wall shades,

and the huge punkah, with its deep fringe, began to heave to and fro overhead.

"Welcome, Captain Harrower, again, say I—and God bless you!" said Dr. Weston, kindly patting Jack's head of close, curly hair, as if he was still a boy. "I am glad to be able to say *Captain*, for you were only a subaltern when we last had the pleasure of seeing you. This is truly an unexpected delight!"

"And how do you like India?" asked Lena, feeling that she must say something.

"You forget that I knew India well, even before I had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Weston," replied Harrower, with gentle reproach in his tone, while toying with his coffee-cup.

"You remember," said Kate, "that we saw you on the course at Calcutta, soon after we landed?"

"Yes, but for a moment only. It was in November, I think, when the evenings there are so delightfully cool, and where, by gun-fire, about five in the morning, everybody is astir, on foot or in carriages, on the course, greeting each other in the grey dawn—a strange sight to a European."

Polly was a bright and blue-eyed mischievous English hoyden, with a wealth of wonderful golden hair, and to Harrower she seemed to be still

the same Polly who used to drop burrs into his pocket, pin papers to his coat tail, and tease him and Lena, it appeared now so long, long ago, at home.

The Indian sun had already stolen the English roses from her soft cheek, and the girl of sixteen was as pale and creamy in complexion as Kate, who was twenty, and Lena, who was five years older, but her girlish drollery and waggish *espieglerie*, made her very winning, and a source of great amusement to her father, who doated on her.

Kate's beauty, though she was a fair blonde of the purest Saxon type, was of the same character, but in many respects superior to that of Lena. She had a bright, happy, and perfectly contented expression. Engaged to Rowley Mellon, and feeling assured that within a year, at most, she would be a bride, she was taking all the enjoyments that came in her way—even flirting a little when Mellon was absent—and in our Indian garrison towns there is always plenty of excitement and amusement.

"I am truly glad to see you again under our roof, dear 'Jack Harrower,'" said she in a whisper, while taking his arm caressingly between her hands; "glad, as you are Mellon's friend, and for the sake of the old times."

Harrower's heart swelled as she spoke, and he felt a vehement desire to give the beautiful Kate a tender embrace.

The storm of grief, of bitterness, and of wounded self-esteem, which had swept through the breast of Harrower, when Lena first proved false to him, and preferred his rival, had all agitated perhaps in a keener degree, the heart of Lena, when *her* turn came, and had been endured by her, deservedly, as he knew ; and yet he pitied her, and was generous enough to doubly hate the man who had served her—exactly as she had served *himself* !

The drawing-room was brilliantly lighted now, and as Lena sat by his side on one of the great, yellow damask fauteuils, Harrower, while listening to her voice, that stirred his inmost heart, and while talking of common-place things in a common-place way, could not keep his thoughts from wandering back to the Lena of other times.

Were those the same dark tresses, and the same little white fingers, with which he had toyed ? Those lips the same that he had kissed in moments of happiness, known to themselves only ? Those the same eyes that had looked with love into his, for hours together, before *that man* came ?

How, in his heart, he cursed him !

So there they sat, side by side, sipping their

coffee, and talking—as who did not?—of the Barrackpore mutiny, while the watchful and listening kitmutgar glided noiselessly about, with a silver jug of goat's milk.

Lena felt all the awkwardness of the situation, and was alternately quiet and cordial, but always so studiously polite, that Harrower thought that his warmest and most undisguised welcome was from the worthy Doctor, from Kate and Polly, and little Willie, an orphan cousin, the pet of the whole household, a curly-haired and rosy English child, about six years old, who in the usual fashion, resented vehemently being borne off to bed, when the ayah Safiyah and the time arrived together.

Colonel Rudkin's name was sedulously or tacitly never mentioned, and Harrower was painfully aware of an awkwardness, even in this reticence, when speaking of the very outrage in which he had borne so tragic a part, and at a time when the Colonel's name was on all men's tongues; but now Rowley Mellon, risking "a rowing and a scrape," came from the Cashmere Gate; and there also dropped in a young ensign, named Dicky Rivers, of the 6th Bengal Infantry, on leave in Delhi, Polly's cousin and sworn admirer, a very handsome boy, but saucy and confident beyond his years, very proud of his first

red coat, and of being, in virtue thereof, admitted as the equal of men in society.

There also came the two Misses Leslie, very pretty, but very affected, Scotch girls—the newest arrivals by the P. and O. line, who, as Mellon whispered, “had come up country to seek for husbands, and shake the pagoda tree.” Captain Douglas of the Palace Guard also dropped in, accessions for which Harrower felt deeply thankful, as the conversation became thereby more mixed and general. Young Rivers alone made a little awkwardness when he arrived.

“Well Dicky,” said Harrower, “how goes it with you?”

“Hey—what—hallo,” exclaimed the blundering Ensign, his face radiant with surprise and pleasure; “you here, Harrower, *after all!*”

“Shut pans, or ‘pon my honour, Rivers, I’ll put you under arrest,” said Mellon, in an angry whisper.

“Oh, fie—Mr. Mellon is actually talking ‘shop’ before ladies,” said the unabashed Ensign.

“How does India agree with you, after Addiscombe?” asked Harrower, alarmed lest he might say something else.

“Oh, I’m jolly as a sand-boy, though what kind of boy that is, or why he should be particularly jolly, we never could find out, even at Addis-

combe, and I think the question would have puzzled the examiners."

"Tea or coffee, Master Dick?" said Lena, with a little asperity in her sweet voice.

"Thanks—neither; I don't believe in such things, though I rather do in iced seltzer, or Bass's pale ale, and hope you agree with me, cousin Lena—at all events, I know Polly does."

The Misses Leslie and Kate Weston betook them to music, and under cover thereof, the usual local *gossip*, or gossip, was discussed; the question—a very vexed one of disputed precedence at the last ball given by the General, between the ladies of Mr. Chili Chutney and Colonel Patna Rhys, the Oude commissioners; how Jones of the light cavalry had taken unto himself as wife, a wealthy and beautiful, but unfortunately Eurasian, girl, and would be "tabooed" therefore; the palpable flirtations at the band-stand of the 54th Bengal; the success of the ice-club; the comfort, even splendour, of the Company's accommodation boats; matches made or broken off; but ever and anon, amid all these frivolous topics, were whispers of the coming trouble, and twice the name of Colonel Mark Rudkin, made Jack's heart leap, and Lena's long, dark eyelashes droop.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE EVENING PASSED.

FOR a considerable period, old Dr. Weston, who really esteemed and loved Harrower, with all his heart, kept the Captain beside him, and with a friendly interest which was both flattering and soothing, plied him with questions, as to how he had spent his time, where he had served and been quartered, since they last met as intimates, which, as both knew well, meant that unhappy time when Lena evinced a preference for Rudkin.

She kept somewhat aloof from them, and busied herself with the other guests; but the mischievous Ensign took in the whole situation at a glance, and twitching her sleeve, whispered:—

“Go and speak to him, cousin Lena—hang it! it is too bad of you to treat Jack Harrower thus; but perhaps you think old Rudkin will come to the scratch after all, now that he has got his neck out of the matrimonial noose.”

"Silence, Dicky Rivers. How dare you speak to me thus!" whispered Lena, in the same tone, but with positive anger flashing in her eye.

Meanwhile, with his heart full of Lena, and his eyes upon her, it was a hard task for Harrower to be compelled to attend to the two Scotch girls, at the piano, and turn the leaves for them, while, like too many Scotch girls in general, instead of contenting themselves with some Scotch or English song, they squalled fearfully the operatic and spasmodic ditties they had learned at second hand, from some indifferent French or German governess.

A man of open, generous, and gentle disposition, Dr. Weston had been famous for his urbanity and charity at Thorpe Audley. Every morning a handful of silver was laid on his table at breakfast, for distribution in his walks, among those green English lanes his feet would never tread again; all that was over he dropped into the poor's box, at the churchyard gate.

A clergyman of the Christian church, in his broad, human, and liberal views of mankind, he did not think that he was doing evil, when to conciliate the wily and fierce Mahommedan population of Delhi, on their festival of Eed—the twenty-fourth of May—he annually gave them a couple of good, fat Patna sheep, though there

were methodist missionaries, scripture readers, and others, who raised their voices against him for so doing, and distributed bitter tracts to the sepoy, who lit their pipes and hubble-bubbles with them.

“And you think, sir, that our Indian troubles are only beginning?” said Harrower, continuing a conversation they had begun.

“I fear so,” replied the Doctor, as he lay back on the sofa, wiped his gold eyeglasses carefully, and shook his white head; “your genuine Englishman always sneers at that which he does not understand; here the religion, the ceremonies, the traditions, and the manners of these Mussulmans, Hindoos and Mahrattas, are fair game for him! It is a dreadful mistake to treat contemptuously, and to trample on a vast and warlike people, as too many of our countrymen are disposed to do. Already they begin to know their strength, and to feel that we are intruders among them. Even a worm will turn, and why not the proud and pampered Brahmin—the ignorant and misguided sepoy? Shallow reasoners, and sneering jokers, are a nuisance at home, in a land with a well-ordered police; *here* they are a danger and a curse, for those Hindostanees, their blood once roused, are no more to be trifled with, than the lions, tigers, and hyænas, of their native forests.”

"But in what did all this jolly row about caste, originate?" asked Dicky Rivers.

"I can't tell, for the life of me," said Harrower, "but this I know, that every Brahmin loses caste who wears a buff-belt; yet they never seem to think of that."

"In the early part of this year," said the Doctor, "a fellow of low caste—or more probably of no caste whatever—asked a golandazee, or Brahmin artilleryman, for a draught of water from his *lotah*, or brass drinking vessel.

"'Never!' replied the Brahmin, disdainfully.

"'And wherefore?' asked the workman: 'when I am thirsty?'

"'Simply, because the *lotah* by your touch would be rendered unclean and useless to me.'

"'How particular we are about our caste to-day,' sneered the other, 'though you care nothing about handling and even biting the Queen of England's cartridges, which she makes up with the fat of her own pigs, bullocks, and other unclean animals.'

"The genuine Brahmin must live on herbs and pulse, and nothing that has ever had life must touch his hand or lips!

"Perspiring with rage and shame, and in an agony of mortification, at this reply and all it suggested, the Brahmin rushed through the

arsenal and cantonments at Dum-dum, which lie six miles from Calcutta, calling upon all true sons of Brahma to abandon the use of the new Enfield rifle, and to cast away the cartridges, as they were not glazed, but *greased*, with the fat of unclean animals, a secret insult alike to Hindoo and Mahomedan !

“Too readily was the dangerous story believed ; the mischief makers in every regiment, the fakirs, dervishes, and moolahs, who hang about bazaars and cantonments, now proceeded by nods and winks, and words of dark meaning, and by reviving the prophecy, that the Time of Fate—the hundredth year after the battle of Plassey—was approaching its completion, to stir up disorder ; and hence all the mystery of the greased cartridges. Native princes and deposed rajahs naturally wish to make the most of it for their own personal and selfish ends ; and already the subsidised King of Delhi has ventured to order his people in their mosques and places of prayer, to recite a sorrowful song, expressive of humiliation for the downfall of the Mahomedan faith ; and all this, taken with the distribution of the chupaties, leads me to fear, as I said, Harrower, that our Indian troubles are only beginning.”

“The Princes of Delhi are surely disposed to

be friendly," observed Harrower; "rumour says that one of them, Mirza Mogul, or Abubeker, I know not which, sent to you, Miss Weston, some handsome presents."

"Yes," replied Lena, colouring slightly, with a shade of annoyance, "the champac necklace is really beautiful. It was unpleasant to accept of them, even from a wealthy Delhi prince; but to have declined them, would have given a serious offence, and caused gossip."

"Well I'm blowed," began Ensign Rivers.

"Dicky—oh, fie—such language!" said Kate.

"Dicky, I am shocked!" added Polly.

"I'm blowed," persisted the Ensign, emphatically, "if I don't think some of those niggers are spooney upon my cousins! When they come upon the course like a couple of Ali Babas, with all the Forty Thieves after them, there is no getting near uncle's carriage then. They have been known to ride by it for an hour at a time, attracting the attention of all the civilians in Delhi, and making old Mrs. Patna Rhys ready to expire with envy and jealousy! But this is nothing; only think, Harrower, when our girls visited Cawnpore, the Nana of Bithoor—Nana Sahib—put his carriage and favourite white elephant at their disposal; and in exchange for a lock of her hair, gave Polly a glorious sapphire

ring. But then, he chucks his sapphires and diamonds about as we used to do cherry-stones at Rugby."

"Oh, Dicky Rivers, such a griff you are!" said Polly, who was fanning herself with all the gravity of an Indian fine lady, as she nestled on a hassock by her father's knee; "and yet I can't help loving you, Dicky, for all that."

This made several officers laugh, and the Ensign blushed with pleasure, as he had never done since he stood before the chairman at Addiscombe, with the sword of honour in his hand and the Pollock medal on his breast, the hero of the prize day, and of his admiring mother's heart, for Rivers was a clever lad, but at an age when young men are apt to indulge in what the Americans term "tall talk."

His remarks about the Delhi princes made those who heard him smile; but there came a time when this admiration by royalty was remembered with alarm and pain.

"How that boy's tongue runs on!" said Kate Weston, shrugging her white shoulders.

"Let it run," said Harrower; "it is a joyous thing to be young," he added, passing his strong and sun-burned hand through Polly's golden curls.

"Why, Captain Harrower," said Kate, "you are not very old yet."

"I am old in heart, dear Kate," said he, looking into the blue eyes of the beautiful blonde, for Kate was, indeed, beautiful; "old when I was in my twenties, and I am thirty now."

He glanced at Miss Weston, who was talking to Captain Douglas, and fanning herself with a great circular feather fan; and Kate gave him a sweet intelligent smile as she laid her hand on his, and slightly pressed it, with a kindness that could not be mistaken.

"Little Dicky Rivers is amusingly and undisguisedly smitten by his cousin Polly," whispered Mellon, as he leaned over the sofa, behind Harrower; "how the little coquette flirts with him, teasing and flattering him alternately; it's a pretty picture to watch, but rather a funny one."

"Yes, when one is past all that sort of thing, Mellon."

"At your years, Jack?"

"Aye, man, at mine. But this fancy is all the better for Rivers; it will keep him out of scrapes with native girls, and, worse than all, with the half-castes. You know what these dreamy Eurasians, as they call themselves, are here? Indolent, ignorant, and worthless, but often very lovely, with no ideas in the world but for making

love and studying the most alluring style of *deshabille*."

"He should stick to his books and read more," said Dr. Weston, who partly overheard them.

"Ah, that remark was meant for *me*, I know," said the Ensign; "but what is the use of reading anything but Regimental Orders now when one is a soldier?"

"Why, Dicky," interposed Lena Weston, smiling at the forward but handsome lad, "you are exactly like the French officer, who said, 'There should be no other paper but the *Moniteur*—no other book in the world than the Army List.'"

"And that French officer was a sensible fellow. Books—pshaw! what's the odds, so long as you are happy? Hang it, uncle, I had enough of cramming at Addiscombe to last me for the term of my natural life; and what's the use of pens or ink to me now but to answer love letters and invitations, or to write guard reports?"

"Did you ever hear of the Shah Jehan?" asked Dr. Weston, a good-humoured smile spreading over his well-cut but rubicund features, as he surveyed the little officer through his spectacles.

"The Shah Jehan, uncle—no; who the deuce was he?"

Dr. Weston lifted up his hands with surprise, and Polly exclaimed—

“Dicky Rivers, you ought to be ashamed of being such a griffin. He built the new city of Delhi when Charles I. was king of England.”

“Oh, indeed; but you are fresher from Pin-nock’s Catechism than I,” retorted the Ensign.

“He rather agreed with you, nephew, in the idea that a soldier had no need of ink,” said Dr. Weston. “History tells us that one of his soldiers having seized a beautiful female slave, who was the property of a scrivener, the matter was brought before him in the great hall of the palace yonder, but it became somewhat intricate, for the slave loved the soldier, and totally disowned her master.”

“The slave shewed her good taste, didn’t she, Polly?” insinuated Dicky Rivers.

“There was no evidence to decide it, so the Mogul affected to put off the case, and heard several others, and gave judgment on them. Then, as if by chance, he called for ink, and desired the stolen slave to prepare it. The girl did so, quickly and dexterously.

“On this Shah Jehan frowned upon her, and said—

“You have deceived me, woman, and I see that you must belong to the scrivener, as soldiers have

neither occasion for ink or slaves who can make it so well."

The night was now far advanced; champagne, beau-jolais, and seltzer water, well iced, had been handed round; several of the guests had retired in carriages and palanquins, and now the time came when Harrower had to order his horse, and Mellon offered to ride a little way with him towards the cantonments.

The atmosphere was oppressive; but in addition to the great punkah that swung overhead, producing a strange effect to the eye as it swayed past the chandeliers, a pleasant coolness was given to the room by the kitmutgar, Assim Alee, dashing about plenty of Rimmel's vinegar from the establishment of the Feringhee Hakeems, Messrs. Syrup and Bitters, in the Strand, at Calcutta, and brought up country by the steamer to Allahabad, or the rail to Agra.

Somewhat of the old sinking of the heart came over Harrower when he rose to retire. He had paid this visit and "broken the ice" certainly, but he had achieved nothing more, for no sooner was he in Lena's presence, after their long estrangement, than he felt how abrupt it would be to make any reference to their former relations, and that, for a time, no new proposal could be made under all the circumstances.

Lingering with his cork helmet in his hand, he drew near Miss Weston, and said—

“Your papa has kindly pressed me to come and see him as often as I may find it convenient while detached up here.”

“It will give us all the greatest pleasure, Captain Harrower,” said she, looking not at him, however, but at the Chinese hieroglyphics on her fan.

“I have by me a trifling sketch that might please you—here in this strange country, at least.”

“A sketch?”

“Yes, Miss Weston, if you will accept it.”

“Thanks—I shall only be too happy; but of what is it?”

“A little drawing I once made of—of—Thorpe Audley: the village, the church, and—the Lichgate. You remember *it*?”

“Perfectly.”

She grew paler as she spoke, but her voice never wavered. Jack’s did so, without disguise.

“I shall bring it when next I do myself the pleasure of visiting you.”

“Thanks,” she said, hurriedly.

“And now good night.”

“Good night, Captain Harrower—good night.”
He merely touched her hand, and that was all.

He had no recollection of how he bade farewell to Dr. Weston, to Kate, or Polly ; but he found himself mechanically, and by mere force of habit, looking to the girths and bridle of his horse, at the porch of the house, and heard Mellon and Rivers talking to him while lighting their cigars.

Just as they mounted, a window opened on the first floor above the verandah, and the golden tresses of Polly appeared in the blaze of the moonlight, as she laughingly kissed her hand to them, repeating a dozen of "good-byes ;" and then, to tease her cousin Rivers, she parodied a song as he rode off, and sang it after him, like a girlish hoyden as she was :

"With his sabre on his brow,
And his helmet by his thigh,
The soldier loves the kitchen maids,
And they cold meat supply."

CHAPTER VI.

LENA ALONE.

HARROWER's sudden and perfectly unexpected visit gave occasion for many a surmise between Kate and Lena, and caused much thought to Dr. Weston that night.

The good clergyman was well pleased to see that the feelings of Captain Harrower for his family—perhaps for Lena—were still all that he could desire, for Jack was the son of one of his oldest friends, so he was not without the wish, and the secret hope, that our captain of the Cornish Light Infantry might be his son-in-law, after all.

Lena he had never controlled in her affections, and he almost regretted that he had not, in some wise, attempted to do so.

He thought her self-willed, singular, and somewhat capricious. He knew that she had refused several very eligible offers since they had landed

in India, but why she did so he never questioned, as in such matters he left his daughters to be each the mistress of her own actions, as he had perfect faith in them. Rudkin's conduct was certainly a shock to him, as it had been to all the family, so it was tacitly understood that the Colonel's name was a forbidden word in the household, as he and Kate had perceived, that whenever it had been mentioned by chance Lena was stung to the quick, and painfully too.

It was twelve now, mid-night, and every European in Delhi was as sound asleep as heat, mosquitoes, bugs, and squalling babies, or howling jackals would permit them to be.

Long after Harrower, Mellon, and Rivers had ridden off, Lena remained in her own room, alone, and gazing out into the glorious Indian night, lost in thoughts, that the voice, the presence, and the eyes of her early love, had summoned back to her heart, as it were, out of the mists and oblivion of the past.

She sat at an open window, surveying the wonderful beauty of the moonlight, where far away beyond the Jumna, rose the five domes of Homaion's tomb, and the great column of Kutab Minar, a king who reigned in Delhi six hundred years ago. The effect of dome, and spire, and minar, with the brilliant radiance that brought

out all their details; the powerful effects produced by the silvery sheen on one side, and the strong, deep blackness of shadow on the other, were very striking.

The red fire-flies were flashing about; the perfume of the rose and the orange ascended to the window where she sat, for beneath was a garden, exceeding in its beauty that of "King Rene's Daughter."

"A garden of the tropics—studded o'er
With all rare flowers! Behold the lofty palms!
I could be sworn this paradise arose
In some fair summer night, when Dion gave
One golden hour to her Endymion."

But unlike Iolanthe's garden in that sweet valley of Provence, there came through it at times on the stillness of the night, the melancholy howl of the jackal, from the jhaw-jungle and groves of teak and pepul trees, beside the Jumna.

On the terrace below, more than one adjutant bird—a large and ravenous species of heron, held in great veneration by the Brahmins, and so named for its supposed military strut—was nestling with its head under its wing, after being gorged with toads, lizards, and small serpents; but Lena saw only where, about four miles off, a few lights burned dimly in the cantonments, far

away beyond that magnificent palace, where the dynasty of the Moguls—the representatives of the great Timour—had been, outwardly, at least, content to reside in comparative obscurity, since Lord Wellesley destroyed the power of Scindiah, and assigned Delhi to Shah Allum as a dwelling-place.

Towards those lights and tents, she knew that Captain Harrower was now wending his way.

Jack would come again, she knew, and she wondered if he would come soon; not, however, that she wished for that event in the slightest degree. There was, no doubt, an awkwardness about his coming to visit them at all; though past events and bitternesses were known only to themselves and to—ah, well—to Rudkin, who she knew dared not speak of the matter, in society, at least.

So with all her friendship for Jack, with all her esteem for his frank, manly, and generous character, and for his unchanged and unflinching love for herself, Lena felt that she would rather he did *not* visit them; yet she would have been disappointed, had he, without doing so, left Delhi for the head-quarters of his regiment, which was further down the country.

"He loves me still, poor fellow!—still, poor fellow, after all!" she whispered to herself.

It was impossible for her not to feel gratified and flattered by this supposition, but she also felt personally humiliated by the conviction that she had used him shamefully, and more than ever had she been sensible of this, after Rudkin, a professed male flirt, had broken his hastily formed engagement with her, to marry another for her wealth.

Rudkin ! she clenched her little white teeth, and a dangerous gleam passed over her dark gray eyes, as she thought of him. She knew not whether she once loved, or now hated, that man most—a doubt that would not have been flattering to Harrower had he known of it.

Even if her old love for Jack revived, she could not accept him now, as a *dernier-resort*, with honour to herself, and still less with honour to him ; so far better would it be, and so she repeated to herself a thousand times, that his visits should not be resumed ; and she resolved that during the short time his company was quartered in Delhi, she would certainly endeavour to avoid him as much as possible.

For the last three years they had seen each other but once, and then it was on the course at Calcutta, in the presence of many strangers.

But she knew he would return, her heart told her so ; and he had promised her a sketch of

Thorpe Audley church and village, and of the Lichgate arch, where lay the mossy stile at which they used to meet. She knew what *that* gift imported—either a reproach or a remembrance.

Oh the time that seemed to have passed since those days, and the miles and miles of roaring sea that rolled between them and dear old England now!

It seemed strange to reflect, that had Rudkin never come between them, she might have been for the last five years John Harrower's wedded wife!

With a quick, small hand, Lena threw back nervously the heavy braids of her dark brown hair, as if she would court to the utmost, the breath—breeze it could not be called—of the hot Indian night.

She strove to analyse her feelings more closely than she had ever done before. Jack she had certainly loved truly and fondly, with all the passion of a young girl's first love, before Mark Rudkin came, with his more stately presence, more insinuating, more worldly, and more practised manner—the manner of a man who had conquered alike the love and the scruples of many women; and there came to her memory a quotation from the French—a piece of musty senti-

ment from Jean Jacques Rousseau—which the Colonel had used on many occasions, and generally found very effective; and it was a maxim with which Lena had actually striven to salve her conscience and to comfort herself, for her own fickleness, till Rudkin—married the wealthy widow:—

“We may love, and *think* we love very truly, and yet find *another*, to whom we cling with all our strength, as if it only required our two hearts to make one perfect and harmonious whole.”

With this piece of sophistry—poison instilled by Rudkin—she had, we say, sought consolation, for crushing, if she did not break, Jack Harrower’s heart; and yet he loved her still—she was sure of it!

She felt certain that she had acted falsely, vilely, and been justly punished; and that she was not worthy of a love so steady and so true—a love that neither time, falsehood, change of scene, nor circumstances could destroy; but which must, nevertheless, be unavailing, as she would never marry Jack now, even if he asked her a hundred times.

Suddenly a rather mortifying idea flashed upon her! What if the continuance of Harrower’s love was all a fancy, a vanity of her own? What if it had evaporated long ago, or found another

object? What if she had become perfectly indifferent to his heart and eye, and if he was engaged to be married to another, and all her recent reflections and speculations were as moonshine in the water?

He had certainly looked "unutterable things" to-night, but had said nothing of much importance.

Would Rudkin come to visit them now—now that he was free? She hoped he would not *dare* to do so; and yet she feared the influence of his presence on herself, and that she might be lured to love him after all. And then she wept amid her doubt and depression, and after a time summoned the ayah Safiyah to dress her hair before she retired to rest.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

WITH all its defects and drawbacks, Harrower thought this one was one of the most delightful nights he had spent in India.

He would treasure its memory as one of the bright spots in his existence, and so he said to Rowley Mellon, as with the reins dropped on their horses' necks, they rode slowly towards the cantonments in the moonlight, after they got rid of the Ensign, who informed them that he "hung out at an hotel in Chandney Choke, where he should be glad if they would beat him up any evening."

"Good-bye, Dicky," said Rowley Mellon; "I am to breakfast with the Westons—any message for Polly?"

"You're a lucky fellow, Mellon; but don't quiz me about Polly," replied the Ensign, whom the champagne had made sentimental. "I re-

member," he added, while smoothing what he conceived to be a fair mustache, "a novel that I used to read at Addiscombe, unknown to the masters and professors. It asserted that 'there is no harm at all in kissing one's cousin when one likes—it is quite as harmless and much nicer than kissing one's sister, and is on the whole a very pretty occupation. The little supplementary acts of putting one's arm round the waist, laying one's hand on the shoulder, and playing with the dear little cousin, are even more harmless than the kissing.' That style of study was better fun than parsing Cæsar's Commentaries, digging at Straith's Fortifications, and Shakespeare's Hindostani."

"It is to be hoped, Dicky, you will confine your cousinly attentions to Polly," said Harrower, laughing.

"I have no other intentions, Jack; and if you mean to join the Westons on the course to-morrow, be sure to come on a kicking horse."

"Why?"

"Because there is always a mob of those civilian fellows about them, and the dust spoils one's uniform—but here is Chandney Choke—good-bye."

And at last they were rid of Dicky's chatter.

That night Harrower had stood by Lena's side

at the piano, and turned the leaves for her, while she played and sang ; again he had looked down on that beloved head, on the tiny and delicate ears, the slender white throat and curved shoulders, as he had done in other times.

Again he had heard her voice thrilling him with an old song she had been wont to sing long, long ago, and his soul had been stirred within him by mingled delight and sadness. Once she lifted her dark eyes inquiringly to his, when in his entrancement he forgot to turn the leaf ; and the look she gave him seemed so like one of her old lover-like glances coming back out of the happy past, after all the hopeless years that had rolled away !

In that evening Jack Harrower had lived all the past and all his lover days over again.

"But to what end may all this be ?" he asked himself.

"You didn't turn up at the Cashmere Gate to-day," said Mellon ; "Ripley of the 54th, Wilmoughby and Doyle of ours, tiffed with me—if, indeed, a mild glass of grog and a cheroot can be called tiffin."

"No—the plain truth is, Rowley, that I forgot all about it."

"Or remembered only Lena Weston."

"Yes, that's about the mark. Oh ! Rowley,

I'd do anything to please that girl—anything, from selling out of the corps to jumping into the Jumna. All the past has come over me again!"

"Has it come over *her*?" asked Mellon, drily, as he watched the smoke of his cigar ascending in spirals.

Harrower shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"Delusions are delightful, certainly, while they last," said he. "It must be very gratifying to the vanity of a griff or a greenhorn, in his first red coat, to fancy himself in love with a girl like Polly Weston; or still more, to imagine that another man's wife conceals an unfortunate attachment for him; but it is a devil of a thing for a plain matter-of-fact fellow like me to be in love with a girl like Lena Weston, who adheres to such a swain as Mark Rudkin, whether he be faithful or false—lover, husband, or widower!"

"If she do adhere," replied Mellon, almost laughing at his friend's vehemence; "but I am sure she has dismissed him from her mind for ever."

"Would to heaven I could think so!"

"Try—take courage; Kate, I know, and all the family, are with you; so perhaps, Jack, we may be brothers-in-law yet."

"Engaged people are often a bore in society, and stupid when together, Mellon; but it was a

pleasure to me—circumstanced as I am with Lena—to observe the polite tenderness, the affectionate confidence and ease, which characterised the bearing of you and Kate Weston to each other.”

“Well—when two persons are intending or hoping to pass their lives together, sufficient time may be found for being spooney or mooney, without acting ‘like birds on Valentine’s Day.’”

“True, Mellon.”

“I believe I should have been married to Kate long ago, but that I am deeply dipped with one of those loan hanks, which are the curse of our Indian service—besides owing three thousand rupees to the Agra.”

“If you don’t book up well on the Sonepore Plate—”

“I’ll have to do a little bill with some of those rascally Parsees; it will be all the same a hundred years hence, and, as Rivers says, what are the odds, so long as you are happy? I had made up my mind to marry a dowager, or a copper-coloured heiress, such being best suited to my monetary and matrimonial purposes; but the moment I saw Kate Weston, I felt there was an end of all that. Through my second uncle, Colonel Skulk, of the Honourable Company’s Opium office, I was offered an appointment as collector of something

or other, at Curryabad ; but I had made a capital book on the Calcutta race, and foolishly declined. Now, ere I can be a Benedict, I must wait for my company at least."

"As there is no purchase in the Bengal army, and you are not far up the list, you may have to wait long enough for your promotion, Rowley."

"I hope not, for dear Kate's sake, as well as my own," said Mellon ; "I dislike long engagements."

"I got my company at six-and-twenty, for only three hundred pounds above the regulation price. We were then on the march to Moultan."

"A bad style of things, Harrower, and such should not be."

"Still they do exist, and, as I can't alter, I may as well avail myself of them."

Mellon now left him to be present with his guard at the Cashmere Gate, about the time that he expected his friend Colonel Ripley (who was field-officer of the day), would make his night visit to inspect the post ; and Harrower proceeded alone, and immersed in thought, towards the cantonments, walking his horse slowly, and without any cause for fear, though the very air was full of rumours of danger, and few officers now rode abroad without pistols in their holsters.

No outrages had as yet been committed in the

kingdom of Delhi, and the roads around the great city were, comparatively speaking, as safe as those in the neighbourhood of London, though there were old men who could remember them to be pretty much the same as they were in the days of Thevenot, an old traveller, who speaks of them as being "infested with tigers, panthers, and lions, and robbers (i.e., Thugs) of both sexes, who catch travellers by throwing nooses with great dexterity about their necks, and then strangle and rob them. They likewise plant handsome women on the road, with their hair dishevelled, and feigning to weep for some misfortune. Unwary travellers, being moved by compassion, or touched by their beauty, enter into conversation with them, or take them up behind on their horses, which gives them an opportunity to throw a noose over their heads, and men are always at hand to assist them.

Such were the roads about Delhi in "the good old times," whose departure the sepoy were beginning to lament.

Several officers coming up at a rapid trot, overtook Harrower at the gate of the cantonment, where, of course, a sepoy quarter-guard, under a Jemmidar, or native subaltern, was posted.

"You'll dine with us to-morrow, Captain Har-

rower?" said one, whom he recognised to be Colonel Ripley, of the 54th Native Infantry, a frank and jolly officer.

"With pleasure I would—but—" pondered Harrower, thinking of when his next meeting with Lena might be.

"No 'buts—you must come," resumed the Colonel; "a man like you on detachment can't think of dining alone in his own bungalow—it's absurd! To-morrow is our weekly guest night. There's Mellon, Temple of yours, little Rivers of the 6th, and many more, coming. I'll send your name to the khansamah (messman) of ours, and you'll drop in when the drum beats."

"Thanks, Colonel—you'll excuse me if I cannot stay late."

"No more can I—I've to visit the Brigadier at five in the morning, and to-morrow the overland mail closes."

On Harrower entering his bungalow, he was surprised to find it dark, deserted, and empty.

He called loudly for wax candles, but received no reply.

"Qui hi—qui hi!" (who's there). This is the usual mode of summoning a servant in India; but there was no response. With the aid of a lucifer match, he soon procured a light; but

found that he would have to prepare his own hookah if he preferred it to a cigar, and to whisk the horse-hair chowry for himself, ere he retired to rest, for the usually assiduous Ferukh Pandy was no where to be found. Neither were syce nor bheestie (*i.e.*, groom or water-carrier) to be seen, as by preparing supper, if Jack fancied a slice of ham or so forth, they would lose caste, so, as he had no caste to lose, he proceeded to serve himself, and anathematise India as "an infernal hole!"

It was evident that all his servants were absent, without leave. Even the punkah-wallah had levanted; a most singular piece of audacity.

"Very odd, all this!" muttered Jack; "decidedly those fellows are up to something, though one can't exactly say what it is."

Even the howling dervish, Hafiz Falladeen, had disappeared from the gate of the Compound. No trace of him remained, but the hole in which he had wedged his filthy person; but ere long we shall show where he and the worthy valet, Ferukh Pandy, were on the night in question.

"By the Lord Harry! I'll make those darkies dance when they return," said Jack, glancing to where his whips hung, as he stretched himself at full length on a Chinese easy chair; "and now

for a glass of brandy-pawnee and soda—or a biscuit and Madeira—no use going to bed, when I'm booked for morning parade in less than two hours."

CHAPTER VIII.

MESSROOM OF THE 54TH NATIVE INFANTRY.

WORTHY Harrower's mental threats about making "the darkies dance" to the crack of his whip, evaporated in the early morning, when his kit-mutgar found him fast asleep in the cane easy chair, with his legs on the table, though the first drum had beaten for parade—a manilla cheroot between his teeth, a cup of cold tea (as a refresher) on one side of him, and on the other a pile of cigar ashes, on an Agra soapstone plate.

"Ugh!" muttered Jack, as he started up, stiff, shivering, and rubbing his eyes and elbows; "such a bore it is, this monotonous round of duty—up at gunfire—present again at parade in full-dress at 4 P.M.; guards, committees, courts, and piquets; men to pay, and hospital to visit; but anything is better than going through the musketry class!"

The long and breathless day, broken chiefly by

the afternoon siesta, which is so general and necessary an indulgence all over India, passed slowly away, and Harrower changed his mind a dozen of times as to when he should visit the Westons—whether on that evening or the next; whether he should wait for an invitation, or his visit being returned by the Doctor at the cantonments.

Colonel Ripley's invitation to the 54th mess certainly interfered somewhat with a visit on that evening; and he suddenly remembered, with something like a naughty word on his lips, that he could not go on the following evening either, as he had a set match at billiards to play with Doyle, of the Bengal Fusileers—a match on which some of the 38th and 74th men had laid heavy stakes; and it may be recorded that he won it too, pre-occupied though he was, by scoring more than forty running off the red ball.

The courses of the dinner passed as a dream to Harrower, for, if not with Lena, he would rather have been alone in his own bungalow, for a man in love, especially if he be a disappointed one, is worth little as a companion, and almost less as a member of society; but few or none, save Mellon, would have suspected that such was the state of "jolly Jack Harrower," as he was generally named, and that the goodly row of officers in cool

white uniforms, who sat at the long mess-table of the 54th, with a turbanned crowd of dusky attendants hovering behind their chairs—every guest brings his own servants in India—bored, rather than amused him, till the cloth was removed, tobacco introduced, and the business of the rather sultry April night began, while white vests were slyly unbuttoned, cigars were lighted, the hookahs began to bubble under the table, and the great punkah swayed noiselessly to and fro from the ceiling.

A large party was present; Colonel Ripley was in the chair, and there were Mellon, Rivers, Doyle, Captain Douglas, and Willoughby from the palace, and several married officers of the corps, who had been lured from their own domestic circles by the pleasant jollity of the mess-table, and its old remembered associations.

The mysterious distribution of chupatties, or cakes of unleavened bread, was of course duly discussed. It was a sign which many old Scottish and Irish officers of the Indian service correctly interpreted as a signal for war, such symbols having been common enough among the old Celtic clans; but such suggestions only excited the derision of their unthinking English comrades, till the crisis came. Many present were loud and strong—particularly the two foredoomed

officers, Douglas and Willoughby—in their belief in the truth and loyalty of their brown sepoy, and in the force and habit of perfect *discipline*. No revolt, they were certain, would stain the ranks of the brigade at Delhi, whatever had happened elsewhere; and these assurances were very pleasant and acceptable to Harrower, and the other Europeans who were present.

It was the birthday of one of the royal princesses, and as her Majesty's subjects are nowhere more loyal, even *à la mort*, than in distant Hindostan, the toast was proposed by the colonel, and drunk with all the honours in every species of liquor, from pink champagne to bitter beer, for such a license is allowed at table, in consequence of the climate, and the different tastes or constitutions of the guests. The band played merrily in the verandah outside; the heat was great; tatts, or wetted mats, were spread over the open windows, for the night actually grew sultry, and the mess chuprassies, or waiters, were kept on the trot with the ice-pails.

There was no theatre, no opera, no parliamentary intelligence to talk about; but there were the local races, shooting, tiger-hunting, pigstick-ing, and many a manly adventure to relate. There was a little gossip, too; how Mellon had danced thrice with Miss Kate Weston at the Governor-

General's ball, and thus made their engagement quite public, as it is one of the mysteries of Bengal etiquette (or used to be before the P. and O. Line and the railways, too, became so perfect) that a lady never dances more than *once* with the same gentleman in the course of an evening unless they are to be married, a system which must have originated in the great scarcity of European women in the East.

"That is so like the gossip of Calcutta," said Harrower; "society there delights in it."

"So does society in Chatham — eh, Jack? What about the old commandant of the Depot Battalion?"

Ere Harrower could retort upon Doyle the hidden arrow contained in this speech, the Colonel proposed Kate Weston's health, and so many genuine good wishes were expressed, that Rowley Mellon was put upon his mettle, and had to respond, which he did in somewhat of an affected lisp, tugging the while at his long light whiskers, retaining his eyeglass in his right eye by a contraction of the muscles, and he spoke, not without a certain amount of nervousness, for a score of smiling faces were turned towards him.

"Is it married you're going to be, Mellon?" said Doyle, in his deep, mellow brogue; "isn't it

Fielding that says, man is fire and women tow, and the devil sets a light to them."

This caused a laugh, under cover of which Mellon sat down and drained his glass.

After this the conversation became "shoppy," and the comparative advantages of half and whole batta stations, tentage, &c., were elaborately discussed.

"India's a mighty fine place for a poor man, anyhow," said Pat Doyle, whose deep but very pleasant brogue consorted so well with his huge black whiskers and wild Irish eyes; "mighty fine entirely," he added with infinite gusto, as the third allowance of champagne went round in foaming silver jugs, "it's the best poor man's country under the sun. Bedad! I know many a fellow living here, like the son of an Irish king, and enjoying every luxury in life (except coolness) on his pay and allowances, that would starve at home."

"True, in some instances, Mr. Doyle," said Colonel Ripley; "but the country has its drawbacks too. Not the least of these is the fact, as a certain writer says, 'That India is so far off, that no one in England cares a brass farthing about what goes on there, except those peculiarly interested, and so long as they get their dividends, what do they care?'"

It was not without weariness, almost impatience, that Harrower listened to roars of hearty laughter that burst forth at times, for the smallest of jokes will go a long way at a mess-table, when all are heedless, thoughtless, and resolved to be happy; but these bursts could be heard by some poor fellows who were sick or dying of fever in the adjacent bungalows, and whose places at that merry table would, ere long, be filled by others, for "life in India is but one long fever," and death is never far off; and Jack was bored by the chit-chat and gossip which at other times would have amused him as the staple of barrack and cantonment conversation; and so dreamy had he become, that Pat Doyle, who sat next him, had quietly taken the snake of the hookah from his hand, and smoked it for half the night, unheeded by him.

Harrower, however, was certainly roused from his unwonted apathy when he heard Captain Douglas informing Mellon, "That Colonel Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, as Barrackpore had become unpleasant to him since the domestic tragedy of last month, was to be sent on the staff up country, either to Allahabad or Delhi—most probably the latter, as the Colonel *wished it*."

This rumour was gall and wormwood to him, and he took a deep draught of champagne, into

which Ferukh Pandy dropped a large piece of ice, and he strove to be a man again, and to join, as was his wont, in the conversation about him; but what mattered it to him, the capital score which Eversly or Willoughby made—no end of a score, indeed!—the best of the Brigade Eleven, and when he carried his bat off the field at the great garrison cricket match, how he had been complimented by Mrs. Patna Rhys and the ladies; how he had been cheered by the sepoys, and what a long face Frank Temple, of the Queen's 32nd, made when bowled out by the first ball, and a big O was put opposite to his name in the report of the match in the *Delhi Gazette*. He smiled, however, when he heard of those things, for with their native games and sports Englishmen carry Old England with them all the world round.

"We ought to have a ball, I think," said a 54th officer, who, believing himself to be musical, had always charge of the band.

"Yes, do by all means," shouted Dicky Rivers, from the foot of the table; "and invite the Westons and their friends, the new Scotch arrivals."

"Who are they?" drawled Horace Eversly of the 54th, a fair haired, long legged, and solemn looking dandy, whom Mellon always designated "a vain snob," and who had scarcely spoken all night. He was one of those young men, who

feel it a bore to think, and a greater bore to speak. He wore his hair accurately divided in the centre and down the back of his head, and looked like a bust in a hair-dresser's window. He seemed one of those poor, lifeless, un-impressionable creatures, two or three of whom are to be found in every regiment; who never smile, to whom everything comes as a matter of course, and who live in a sublime, and self-conceited calm that nothing can disturb. Yet he shewed courage when the time for it came. "They are girls, come no doubt, to seek for husbands on this side of the equator — about Chowringee, or up country—eh?" he suggested.

"You're wrong entirely," said Doyle, bluntly and even sharply; "those Leslies are worth looking after—not perhaps that they'd care much for such a very fine fellow as you, Eversly; but their uncle the Judge, can give them two lacs of rupees apiece, in Bank of Bengal shares, and the Great Indian Peninsular Line, too."

"Twenty thousand pounds each!" exclaimed Frank Temple, the Lieutenant of Harrower's Company; "though I don't care about going cheap—"

"You've a mind to enter for one yourself," interrupted Doyle; "it is very kind of you, Temple. You might go farther and fare worse, my boy. They are very nice looking—"

"By candle-light; and horridly vain they'll be about themselves, or their friends—all Scotch girls are," added Eversly.

"How low they wore their book-muslins," said Rivers; "I never saw such a display—did you, Doyle?"

"Bedad, not since I was weaned for certain," was the reply, which raised a little laugh.

"Their shoulders were snowy white at all events,—you can't deny that, Pat Doyle."

"Save for a trifle of the prickly heat, Dickey—what an observant boy you are!"

"The prickly heat will soon pass away," said Rivers, assuming his cloak and cap to share Willoughby's buggy into Delhi; "good night—we'll all turn up on the course, sometime to-morrow, I suppose."

"Eh—aw—is that the little griff, who is so spooney upon young Polly Weston?" drawled Eversly, to the few, who at that late hour, were lingering together at the end of the table.

"Faith, older men than Dicky Rivers, might be so," said Doyle, for she is lovely—downright lovely, and in her soft English beauty, seems a perfect miracle, in this land of leather-skinned, black and slimy Hindoos."

"Rouse yourself, Jack Harrower," said Mellon, "we wish you to tell us that Chatham story,

of which we have all heard so many different versions."

"Then, Rowley, like the knife-grinder, you'll find that, by Jove, I've none to tell."

"Not so—you have a personal adventure—a legend of the service—of the Indian service too; so as there are only a select few remaining, hear it, we must."

"Story about what?"

"The scrape you fell into with pretty Mrs. Woodby, and the old Commandant of the Indian Dépôt Battalion."

"We all have a grudge at him. He twice sent the adjutant for Temple's sword, alleging that he made shindies in his room at night; and he once had me, Pat Doyle, before a general Court Martial, for drawing what he called a caricature of him, in the Regimental Order Book, so we are all ready to believe the worst of him, and the best of you. So fire away, or by the trout of Kilgavower, we'll have Mellon singing 'The Bengal Fusileers,' a ditty that always comes off about this hour in the morning."

"The married fogies are all gone," said Mellon, "and here are only six of us remaining; yourself, Doyle, Eversly, Douglas, Temple and I."

"Agreed then!—here Chuprassy—fill our glasses with something—anything that comes to

hand. Pass the cigar box, Doyle — and here goes for the story," said Harrower, with forced cheerfulness, and a goodnatured desire to please his friends, combined with a wish to pass the time, in any fashion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GARRISON FLIET.

“You ask me to give you a story, when really I have none to tell, that will interest you, I fear. Any one may make up a play; but it is another thing to produce an audience; so anyone may write a book, but it is another affair to find readers.

“Well—in the year before I first embarked for India, it was my evil fortune to be attached to the *Depôt* of my corps—some sixty rank and file—then with one of the *Depôt* Battalions under Colonel Woodby, in Chatham, that great military school, though some give it a harder and certainly a hotter name.

“A raw sub, I had only left Eton some two years or so before, and was summarily sent by the adjutant and sergeant-major, to all kind of drills, to club, sword, manual and platoon exercises, to setting up, facing and marching, twice daily, till

my life grew weary, and I abhorred the gravelled barrackyard, the Spur-battery, and even the green Lines that stretch towards Gillingham; but all that sort of thing you know as well as I; till I was reported fit for duty, and had the honour of commanding a guard over a string of sulky convicts in the dockyard.

"I was often in scrapes, I admit; Colonel Woodby was a tight hand, but after a time he got tired of 'rowing me,' and sending the adjutant for my sword. Thus, I could almost do as I pleased, in or out of barracks — at least so Temple and others of our men were wont to say.

"Old Woodby was a dreadful bugbear and bullying *behaudar* to all in general; but to ensigns in particular; he had a natural antipathy to officers of that distinguished rank in the service. He was stunted in figure, was almost destitute of neck, had a round bilious looking face, with two fierce, twinkling little eyes, and was everyway the best specimen of the old curry-eating, rupee-collecting, yellow-visaged, hubble-bubble smoking Anglo Indian tyrant, I ever met. He hated Europe naturally and all connected with it. He had a terrible reputation when up country here; but when he came to Calcutta, en route for Europe, on the sick list, he set his zenana of

Hindoo girls adrift, and returned to England a sternly moral character; and though he was yellow as a new guinea, and had a liver as large as his purse, he married a girl of great beauty who was only a third of his age, and settled down comfortably on the staff as the commandant of a Dépôt Battalion.

"However, even one who was not an enthusiastic admirer of the service, must have admitted that the sight of old Woodby—Bluebeard, we called him—in full war-paint, on a black kicking brute of a horse, that spent half its time on its hind legs, was certainly impressive, when he and his unwearied adjutant scampered from wing to wing on a field day, and raved at all and sundry; or when in a fit of ill-temper he backed his horse among the people, making it curvet, prance, paw the air, swerve round, and do everything but stand on its head. Hoarse in voice, red in face, furious in temper, and the wonder of all; with dogs barking and women screaming about him, old Woodby was in his glory at an inspection on the Lines.

"Well, his wife was the reverse of all this, a young, and wonderfully pretty woman, with a brilliant complexion, bright brown hair, laughing brown eyes, lashes that were black, and an expression of winning sweetness that few could

withstand. How such an ill-assorted pair came to be united in the holy bonds of matrimony, no one knew; but united they were, and there was—no, not quite an end of it, for the Colonel was by nature, constitutionally jealous of her, without any solid reason, till he at length caused it, and was normally in as furious a state of mind as Othello, after Desdemona lost the handkerchief.

“If any unfortunate fellow was too attentive overnight in dancing with pretty Mrs. Woodby, in procuring ices for her, seeing her through the crush of the supper-room, in daring to place the cashmere shawl, or the opera cloak, over her smooth white shoulders with too much care, as he led her to the carriage, he was pretty sure to catch it next day in some fashion, and if he belonged to the *Depôt Batallion*, might be thankful if he was not sent to practise the goose-step in Brompton barrack-yard, or banished on detachment to Tilbury Fort.

“The Colonel hated balls and parties, but was compelled to attend them for the express purpose of watching his wife, when he would rather have been dosing at his club, or having a quiet rubber with the Inspector of Hospitals, the Superintendent of the Dock-yard, or some other big-wig whose rank he deemed nearly equal to his own.

"The result of all this system was to make the lady an accomplished and scientific flirt.

"She was never known to go down to supper with the man whom she really had designs upon, or with whom she intended to 'get up' an affair; but that individual (paired off with some plain old woman by her arrangement) was sure to be seated on her left side, 'to be nearer her heart,' as she would whisper in so winning a way, that he was sure to believe her, as a dozen had done so before.

"It was a standing order of the Colonel that she should never waltz, though she could do so to perfection; and she never did waltz when he was present, but so soon as it was correctly ascertained that the Colonel was set down to an interminable game of whist, or having a glass of grog with some other old fogie, she was whirling away, with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, her white dress sweeping like a maze around her swift and beautiful feet, in the grasp of Green of the Rifles, Kydds of the Cavalry, or some other envied man, pausing only to droop, cast down her long lashes, to lean and sigh, and flirt furiously, while talking of platonic love, with mysterious sentimentality.

"A highly finished coquette now, all her thoughts were centered on conquests and flirta-

tions, which she was pleased to term platonic friendships; and in these laudable pursuits, she sacrificed her time, her health by late hours, and the temper—such as it was—of her fiery spouse.

“Some fellows there were, who asserted that she had concocted a regular code of private signals, whereby, from the draping of the drawing-room curtains, or the arrangement of the dining-room blinds, it could be known to the initiated whether Bluebeard was at home, or absent on duty.

“Captain Jollie Green of the Rifles, and Cornet Sir Lavender Kydds, of the Queen’s own Hussars, and many more, had got into scrapes with her; now, as the spirit of mischief would have it, *my* turn came.

“I was in all the confidence and vanity that could be inspired by my first red coat, and its bullion epaulettes (those splendid badges of which we should *never* have been deprived), when I met her at the weekly Rochester balls, and at those given by the Commandant, the Inspector of Hospitals, the head of the dock-yard at Chatham, and all the grandees of that remarkable place. I found her the cynosure of all eyes, and so closely beset by partners—her cards being usually filled up three deep a day before—that I could never approach her, or even catch one glance of her beautiful brown eyes.

"I had once come upon her suddenly, when, with Captain Green in attendance, she was sketching the ruins of Rochester Castle, and that fine old bridge of the days of King John, which I can still see in fancy, with its quaint eleven arches that span the rushing Medway, great tufts of brown sea-ware waving in the wind upon its buttresses, like the masses of green ivy that tremble in the gaping windows of the great old Norman keep, which for seven centuries has watched the passage of the river.

"She looked up from her sketch, and smiled at me. It was doubtless only because she saw a boy—shall I say a very passable looking boy—in uniform; it was a smile more motherly than coquettish, yet I interpreted in my own fashion, and went home to evening parade, blushing furiously with excitement, and confided to Frank Temple that I was likely to become the rival of Bluebeard at last!

"I felt a little crushed next day, when she passed me in the Vines—the walk near the old Cathedral—without the slightest glance; but then that horrid fellow Kydds and no less than three artillery officers were with her.

"On one occasion I sat in her pew in the Cathedral; the beadle ushered me in because there was a vacant seat, and the Colonel gave me one

of those scowls with which he generally favoured ensigns. He had often regarded me thus, so I was used to it; and I sat close beside *her*, with a beating heart, and scarcely daring to look at her, while the service lasted.

“Her long, dark lashes, that fell over the smoothly rounded, and softly delicate cheek, were never raised, like her bright hazel eyes, from her book, save to gaze on the clergyman’s face, and Ensign Harrower she heeded no more than the grim visage that was carved on the Norman pillar overhead.

“One day—ah, I shall never forget it—I had the good fortune to catch her horse on the Lines, near Gillingham, when it had become restive, and got the bit between its teeth, so that she had lost all control over it. Still we were never introduced; our acquaintance was merely one of casual glancing, and though she knew me as well as the big drum, or the vane on the barrack roof, which represents a rifleman firing, she did not—in my vanity I flattered myself that she *dared* not acknowledge me, as I had ever the reputation of being a desperate flirt in a small way, among the pretty Jewesses who keep the cigar and perfumery shops in the High Street and Hammond Place, and who fleece and smile the young subs out of their loose change.

"In the evening after the episode on the Lines, I found myself returning to my quarters, on the Terrace, in a very enviable state of satisfaction, and full of the conviction that now I must be on the footing of an acquaintance—a friend—with the beautiful coquette—the garrison flirt, who had turned the heads of all the community, and whose influence and reputation extended among the Cavalry even to Maidstone and Canterbury.

"Entering my room—my rank entitled me to only *one*—I found Frank Temple, who generally chummed with me in barracks—you remember, don't you, Frank—seated on the table, with a visiting card in his hand.

"It was highly enamelled, and bore a crest and coat of arms, with the address, 'Mrs. Woodby, Medway Villa, Rochester.'

"'Whew!' whistled Frank, 'here's a queer affair! Jack, my fine fellow, the Colonel's wife has been here—actually *here*, in your quarters!'

"'Impossible!' said I, blushing deeply.

"'There is nothing physically impossible in it, whatever there may be morally.'

"'It is some trick—a trick of yours, perhaps,' I exclaimed.

"'It is no trick,' said Temple, impetuously; 'I give you my word of honour, Harrower, that I found it lying on the table; and these are old

Woodby's crest and coat of arms. Thundering snobbery to have them on one's paste-board— isn't it ?

“ ‘ What are they ?’

“ ‘ Heaven and the Herald's College only know—crest, a *lusus nature* proper—supporters, two female figures, only half-draped—decidedly improper.’

“ ‘ Stop this joking, Frank, and tell me where you really did find it.’

“ ‘ Lying on the table beside this book—did she leave it too ?’

“ ‘ No—I sent my man, Phil Ryder, to the garrison library for it, after parade this morning.’

“ ‘ Rum title — what the deuce is it all about ?’

“ ‘ Plot taken from the Newgate Calendar, I should think,’ said I, laughing.

“ ‘ It was the last new ‘sensation’ novel, entitled, ‘The Seven Deadly Sins, and How I Committed Them,’ by one of the most distinguished light-literary ladies of the day, a production in which the heroine, a fair Belgravian, got herself hopelessly entangled in breaches of most of the commandments, together with a little bigamy.

“ ‘ I now mentioned the adventure on the Lines.

“ ‘ Take care, Jack,’ said Temple, seriously, ‘ or you'll have an affair with Mrs. Woodby.’

“ ‘It seems as easy as cribbage now!’ I replied, jauntily, and feeling somewhat elated.

“ ‘These things never end well,’ said Frank, sententiously.

“ ‘It is very odd that she should have called on *me*—’

“ ‘Not at all, if you saved her life on the Lines, as you say you did, Jack.’

“ ‘But she has called here before that interesting event.’

“ ‘True—it beats cock-fighting!’

“ ‘But for heaven’s sake don’t mention it to anyone!’

“I pledged Frank to secrecy, and rung for my servant, Phil Ryder, to ask him if anybody had been at my quarters that day; but I rung in vain. Mr. Ryder was three days absent on a tipsy ‘spree,’ so I could learn nothing from him about it. The sentry posted near the door had not seen anybody near the place, and grinned at my question, as you may well suppose.

“Though very much puzzled as to why the Colonel’s wife should visit *me*, and very improperly elated thereby, I resolved to visit *her*, without delay, on the morrow, all the more readily and confidently that I knew from the garrison Order Book that our ferocious old Commandant was detailed for a district Court Martial, at Wool-

wich, and would be absent at least until evening.

"So for some hours the coast would be clear—the fair position open to attack.

"Now, not to keep you behind the scenes, and as I hate all mystery, I may as well inform you of what afterwards transpired. It seems that Mrs. Woodby had been perusing the same identical sensational story, in three volumes, post octavo, which Phil Ryder had brought from the library, and that she had inadvertently left between the leaves one of her calling cards, which she had, naturally enough, been using as a marker.

"The card had fallen out, and my worthy Fidus Achates, without a word of explanation, had laid it on the table, where Frank Temple found it.

"Ignorant of all this, and in great anxiety to present myself to one, of whom I doubted not my fine appearance and the gay uniform of the Cornish Light Infantry had made a conquest, when morning parade was over I thought the afternoon would never arrive, so slowly did the time seem to pass.

"I then made a very careful toilet, and ere long found myself at Medway Villa, Rochester, after framing in fancy a hundred pretty speeches and amiable responses from her.

“ ‘Is Colonel Woodby at home?’ I inquired, with the most perfect air of simplicity.

“ ‘Colonel’s gone to Woolwich, on dooty, sir,’ replied the orderly—one of my own men, by the way—who opened the door; ‘but Mrs. Woodby is at ’ome.’

“ ‘Take up my card, please.’

“ He saluted me, wheeled round, as if his heels were on a well-oiled pivot, and marched upstairs before me to the door of a very pretty little drawing-room, into which I was ushered; and where I found myself among muslin curtains, marble tables, and glass-shades—alone.

“ I felt that there was a little awkwardness in the whole affair, and that perfect confidence only would carry me through it.

“ She, however, had begun the matter; else, wherefore her card?

“ From the windows I could see the bright blue Medway, winding down between green and sloping uplands to the old bridge that connected Rochester and Stroud; the keep of the castle, which so closely resembles the White Tower of London; the spire of the Cathedral; the oyster and fisher-boats in the creek of the river, and high over all, half hidden in the sunny haze, on the green and grassy hill beyond, Fort Clarence, the abode of the insane, where, if old Woodby returned and

found me *here*, I thought would be the safest place for me.

"There was the sound of a soft voice, the rustle of a perfumed silk dress, and I found myself before the dazzling Mrs. Woodby, who was fully six years my senior, and whose sudden appearance put to flight all the fine speeches I had been so elaborately preparing. In her clear, laughing eyes, there was an expression of droll curiosity, that caused my embarrassment rapidly to become confusion, all the more that she made not the slightest reference to her visit, and the circumstance of leaving her card for me.

"'You—you were at the barracks, I think, yesterday, Mrs. Woodby?' said I, resolved to take the initiative, as we seated ourselves on the same sofa.

"'No—I have not been near the barracks for more than a week,' she replied.

"'For more than a week!' said I, aghast.

"'At least not nearer than the Lines, and I have again to thank you for so opportunely assisting me then—you are, I think, the same gentleman.'

"I was sorely confounded! so she had not visited me after all—or was she only acting? Yes, it must be so; the pretty rogue was only acting; so I shall act too, thought I, and say nothing as yet about the card.

"Of yesterday's episode I might have taken legitimate advantage, as a reason for calling to inquire after her health, but I was too young in such matters to see that.

" 'You have called to see Colonel Woodby—on duty, no doubt; I am sorry that he is from home—gone to Woolwich by the rail last night. When do you expect the route—the order to embark for India?' she asked, with one of her softest smiles.

" 'I don't know,' stammered I; 'but I thought that—that—the Colonel might be able to tell me something about it.'

" 'Oh, be assured that it will come quite soon enough for you; and then think what a change! to be cooped up for so many months in a crowded transport; to have to weather the Cape and the storms in the Bay of Bengal, after the gaieties of Chatham, the balls, the parties, the mess, the select dinners, cricket on the lines, regattas on the river, the pretty partners at croquet on the lawn, and everywhere extremely safe but limited flirtation—limited, as the business advertisements say. Sad to have to forego all that, eh?'

" 'I don't flirt,' said I, demurely.

" 'Why, Mr.—Mr.——'

" 'Harrower,' I suggested.

" 'True—I dropped your card.'

“ ‘I don’t know why—that is, somehow I’m always in earnest.’

“She burst into a merry fit of ringing laughter, while I must admit that I was bold enough to attempt, but in vain, to open a pedal communication with the pretty foot that was so near mine, for Mrs. Woodby carried off her *espieglerie* with uncommon *éclat*, and could say the strangest things in the world without exciting the horror of any one but the Colonel; but she was so beautiful and so clever, that people could pardon anything in her.

“ ‘So you don’t know how?’ she resumed; ‘then I must give you a few lessons: but meanwhile you must study some pretty speeches and loving glances, with compliments culled from novels. Study particularly the part of Romeo,’ she added, laying her hand on mine, and sending a perilous thrill to my heart.

“ ‘And now, Mrs. Woodby, evening parade draws near, and I—I must really go,’ said I, for my visit had been greatly protracted by many long and awkward pauses in the conversation, for the woman’s brilliant manner, her winning ways, her wonderful power of eye, and her positive love-making, were very bewildering to a mere lad; and so thoroughly was flirtation constitutional to her, that she could not resist the tempta-

tion of doing a little even with me, a raw ensign in his teens.

“ ‘Go, then,’ said she, still smiling as she kept her soft little hand on mine, and rose with a tragi-comic air, ‘And remember what Juliet said to Romeo in the theatre—I saw *you* there at Rochester last night—

“ ‘I would have thee gone,
And yet no farther than a wanton’s bird,
That lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
And with a silk thread pulls it back again,
So jealous-loving of his liberty.’ ”

“ ‘By Jove! she *must* have left the card, after all,’ thought I, as she held out a lovely hand to me; stooping, I kissed it, with a blushing cheek and hotly beating heart, and when I raised my head—oh, horror! I saw the short stunted figure of Colonel Woodby cased up in his blue frogged surtout, belted, with sash and sabre, and with his fat, fierce visage empurpled by indignation to a dangerous extent.

“ ‘The lady was tolerably well used to that sort of thing; she was perfectly cool, and by no means put out, but I felt myself grow pale when confronted by this ‘new Gorgon.’

“ ‘Mr. Harrower, of the Cornish Light In-

fantry,' said she, presenting me with a well-bred smile.

" 'I have the misfortune to know the young gentleman,' said the Colonel, coldly and huskily; 'I thank him for his visit, but must not detain him from parade'—(looking at his watch)—'in a quarter of an hour the men will fall in, sir.'

" 'By all that's beautiful, I am in a desperate scrape,' thought I, as with a mind a little perplexed, I made my way in a cab back to the barracks at a tearing pace, just in time to save my credit with the adjutant; and meanwhile a strange little scene was being enacted by the loving couple I had left behind me.

" 'You have returned very suddenly, my dear,' said Mrs. Woodby, while smoothing her hair in a mirror, which enabled her to observe the Colonel.

" 'Suddenly — yes, and unexpectedly, too, Madam!' said he, fiercely.

" 'You behaved very coldly—even rudely, to our visitor; I thought the young man was a friend of yours, Colonel.'

" 'Friend of mine—why?'

" 'Otherwise he would not have called.'

" 'I thought the d—d jackanapes was some friend of *yours*, madam, otherwise he would not have dared to call.'

" 'Dared?'

“ ‘Yes, dared, when the garrison orders must duly have informed him that I was to be absent. Yes, madam, *absent*, in Woolwich to-day. This is all trickery, madam,—foul trickery!’ he shouted, as the long pent-up wrath and jealousy burst in perspiration from every feature of his face, which was now turned from its normal colour of yellow to a flaming red. ‘Madam, every day gives me further proof of how your heart has wandered from me.’

“ ‘It is false, Colonel Woodby; but if it had, do you think that studied tyranny, mean suspicions, keen invective, fiery accusations, and furious reproaches, would ever recall it?’

“What an actress that woman would have made! But knowing that she was perfectly innocent in this instance, at least, my friend Willoughby, who, awkwardly enough, heard all this scene as he waited in the outer drawing-room, said that she gave the Colonel, from her flashing brown eyes, such a glance as Jael might have had in her black orbs when she swung her vengeful hammer over the head of Sisera, and swept away.

“Another minute saw the irate Colonel—heedless of his new visitor—mounted on his black charger, and galloping after me to the barracks, where he came straight to my quarters, making a mighty clatter as he ascended the wooden stairs

with his heavy boots, spurs, and brass scabbard.

“ ‘Mr. Harrower,’ said he, with great impressiveness of manner, ‘will you inform me, sir, how you dared to violate the privacy of my family—to visit my house in my absence, and un-introduced, sir—un-introduced?’ ”

“ At that moment, and before I could form an answer, his fiery eyes fell on his wife’s card, which my rascal of a servant had placed in a conspicuous place on my mantelpiece. Phil Ryder was as faithful to me as Strap was to Roderick Random, as Friday to Robinson Crusoe, and yet his blunders were likely to cost me dear.

“ With a shout of rage more like the cry of a wild animal than the voice of a man, the Colonel snatched it from the mantelpiece and hurried away to confront her with this damning proof of her having visited me, and there was an awful row at Medway Villa, you may be assured.

“ He determined to have me brought to book in the matter. All that night and all the next day, he read up Tytler and Simmons on ‘Courts Martial;’ he strove hard to twist the 17th, 80th, and 108th articles of the second section of the *Mutiny Act*, concerning offences and insults—conduct unbecoming an officer, or prejudicial to military discipline—especially that delightfully

vague clause, about 'crimes not specified,' to suit my case; and it was the India House to a China orange, that he didn't contrive to smash me, and all through that unlucky piece of paste-board; but the route came for India—we embarked on a three hours' notice, and next week saw us off the Buoy at the Nore."

* * * * *

By the time Harrower's story was finished, it was found that Doyle had fallen asleep, and set his black, bushy whiskers on fire with a short cigar; that the punkah-drivers had gone to sleep too; and the chuprasseys had gone, weary of waiting on sahibs, who seemed disposed to turn night into day.

"Now, gentlemen," said a 54th officer; "there are billiards and sangaree (negus) for those who choose; the table is in the next room."

"Not for me—thanks," said Harrower; "I am too weary to handle a cue to-night; besides, a billiard table is sure to be crowded about by civilians, who can talk of nothing but indigo and opium—tanks and rum—rain and irrigation, and these are a general style of 'shop,' beyond me."

"Wine then?"

"Not another glass—I've no wish to figure in the sick list to-morrow, though we cool our wine

with ice now, and I can remember, when we were thankful to do so with saltpetre. Ice in India—American ice too—ye gods! when will wonders cease?"

Bright and high shone the clear and silver moon over the far stretching streets of dusky brown huts, in the spacious cantonments, as Harrower and Doyle made their way to their different bungalows, the space between the compounds being scarcely broad enough for the dubious progress of the Bengal Fusileer, who kept repeating again and again, that he was sure "the mess champagne of the 54th had a curious tendency to go into the heels of one's boots."

CHAPTER X.

THE SKETCH OF THORPE AUDLEY.

WHEN looking about his quarters next morning, while dressing for parade, with his eyes half closed by sleep, Harrower's energies were fully roused, when he discovered two cards, which Ferukh Pandey said had been left last evening at the gate of the compound.

They were those of Dr. Weston and Polly, who had passed through the cantonments in the carriage, almost immediately after he had gone to the mess of the 54th.

"Bravo!" thought he; "this is certainly encouraging—so speedy a return of my visit. God bless the kind old Doctor, and dear little Polly!"

But it was more encouraging still, when he found himself invited to dinner, by a pencilled memorandum on the back of Doctor Weston's card, naming the third day ensuing!

All this, it may easily be believed, made Harrower very happy, and put to flight his first morning reflections. These, after such a night of wine, tobacco, and talking as he had spent in the mess-bungalow, had not been pleasant. Though the ostensible hero of this story, Harrower, had, like other heroes, been a boy, and was not above having human weaknesses; but he felt assured that he had talked too much, and said many things that had been better left unsaid; that he had acted ungenerously in holding the pretty Mrs. Woodby up to ridicule, for the mere amusement of a few heedless fellows like Doyle, Eversley, Temple, and so forth; yet it was some consolation to remember that she was as well known in the Queen's Service, as the clock of the Horse Guards, or the vane of Chatham Barracks.

The cards set to flight all thoughts but of the Westons, and he resolved to accept the invitation in person, and to visit Delhi the moment parade was over.

He now hoped to achieve great things with Lena, when presenting her with the long treasured sketch of Thorpe Audley, that place with which they had so many associations in common—memories which could never be forgotten.

"It was there, under that old arch, I first avowed my love for Lena, Mellon, and there she

accepted me," he had once said to his friend ;
"how fleeting was the joy !"

"True," replied the matter-of-fact Rowley ;
"there is a novel which says, 'the first kiss of
love is very pleasant no doubt, but it is a tran-
sient gratification ; you can't carry it away with
you and shew it to your friends in the country.'
It is fleeting after all."

Harrower looked at the sketch again and again,
and touched it up anew with his pencil, the arch
of the Lichgate and its masses of ivy—the stile
that lay beyond—the square tower and the porch
of the old village church, with the chimnies of
the village itself, peeping up among the wood-
lands in the distance. Every chimney there,
Lena would remember, and might recal its house-
hold, their faces, and all their little histories.

How fortunate it was that he had fondly pre-
served this little relic of those happy days, which
he hoped it would bring back to her memory, in
all their strength and purity.

The casual rumour which he had overheard
last night, concerning Mark Rudkin's probable
transference to Delhi, or even to Allahabad,
though that station was more than three hundred
miles distant, haunted him constantly. A meet-
ing between them might certainly lessen his
power over Lena, if power he had, and so

destroy his new found hopes or chances, such as they were.

Forgetting time and place, and thinking only of the girl he loved, impatient Jack Harrower rode into Delhi at noon, a time when no one visits in India, as that is the period of siesta, when, as a traveller has it, "ladies rarely do anything but lie down in their dressing-gowns, scold their ayahs, and powder their necks and faces."

So he arrived at Dr. Weston's mansion merely to be told by the durwan with folded hands and bowed head, while *no* gong was sounded, that "the gates were closed," which is polite Hindostani for saying that "no one is at home;" and with the conviction that he had made a mistake, he had to ride back to the cantonments, under a burning sun, courting the chances of brain-fever, or a coup de soleil, having not even a *chattah* or umbrella over him, as he was mounted; and so he reached his quarters with his sketch unrepresented, and cast himself into an easy chair, in a worry of heat, disappointment, and annoyance.

The dinner day—he counted every hour of the intervening time—came at last, and he presented his sketch to Lena in all due form, not as he had fondly hoped, when they would be alone, but unluckily in the presence of many.

The *date*, pencilled in a corner, might have re-

called some important things to her memory. Whether or not it did so, was not discernible in her manner, of which she had the most perfect control. She looked at the drawing with well-bred interest, remarked its several features, praised it very much, thanked him earnestly, and retired to deposit it in her own room, leaving her sister Kate for a time to receive their guests, whom Harrower was disappointed to find (notwithstanding his unceremonious invitation) were likely to be numerous, for he would rather have found himself in the Doctor's family circle alone.

On the large white marble drawing-room table, which was supported by an enormous mahogany pedestal, among many other things, lay Polly Weston's album, in which she now insisted he should instantly write something, no matter what, were it only his name, among the faded photographs, Chinese rice paper paintings, and Indian landscapes, or snow scenes done on grey cardboard with flake white and black lead, and presented to Polly by more than half the subs and cadets of Delhi.

Therein, with some amusement, he found that Dickey Rivers had transferred the lines from Croley's "Angel of the World," beginning—

"How glorious are thy mountains, proud Bengal!"

appending at the foot thereof his own august autograph—"Richard Rivers, 6th B. N. I. Original verses."

"Mr. Doyle," said Lena, "you will lead in Miss Flora Leslie to dinner."

"A twenty thousand pounder," whispered Mellon; "go in and win at a canter, Pat."

"'With all my worldly goods I thee endow.' Could I say that to the girl, when all I have in this dirty world is a couple of old bullock trunks, a red coat for guard, another for dress, and a couple of regulation swords or so? Oh Lord, wouldn't it be a mighty big swindle?" laughed poor Pat Morris Doyle, "barrin' the whiskers and the laste taste of the brogue."

"You are just the man—the fair Flora has money enough for two."

When, after the gong had thundered in the vestibule, they all solemnly marched in file (as Dicky whispered to Polly, "like the beasts going into the ark,") towards the drawing-room, Harrower found himself paired off with old Mrs. Patna Rhys, whose staple conversation consisted of ayahs and babies, while Lena "brought up the rear" of the procession with the Brigadier commanding the station.

Between the massive silver pedestals of the candelabra, the great central epergne of flowers

and fruit, and a line of beautiful china and alabaster vases of flowers that stood along the centre of the table, he could only get a glimpse of her at times ; so the dinner passed off, and the subsequent hours in the drawing-room, without an opportunity being accorded him of barely doing more than address the most simple common-place to Lena ; so the occasion for which he had longed, and from which he had hoped so much might accrue, passed away without avail ; the sketch had been given and received ; nothing had come thereof, and nothing might ever come ; and that night saw Harrower lingering in his bungalow ere he retired to rest, and thinking, that but for the threatening state of affairs in India, he would endeavour to quit the country and go home to Europe, on a medical certificate, if he could get it.

He visited the Westons at stated intervals now, frequently choosing the cool early mornings, when he knew the girls rode abroad, and while the worthy Doctor was busy with evangelical matters, conferring with regimental divines, Mr. Jennings, the chaplain of the station, scripture readers, schoolmasters, and so forth ; but Polly was always by, little Willie was in the way, or something transpired through which, by a singular fatality, he could never see Lena alone.

Certainly she avoided him, or contrived matters to be thus, yet she managed it with the most wonderful delicacy and tact, so that he, honest fellow, never suspected her, but continued sedulously to hope, and to watch for his opportunity. How well he could remember the time when opportunities had never been wanting! When they had often been alone—alone amid a crowd—when her hand in his hand, her arm leaning on his arm, and pressed against his side, were conversation enough.

Would such a time ever come again?

Then he would remember that in India, doors and windows are always open everywhere; that swarms of servants, with their quick black eyes and suspicious hearts, were always hovering about; that the everlasting punkah-wallah was always on the alert, and that the opportunities for love-making were fewer than in Europe—fewer, indeed, than among the green shady lanes of Thorpe Audley.

He knew that she had much to attend to, for she was now the mistress of a large Indian household, consisting of many copper-coloured ayahs, in scarlet and white robes, and many darker men-servants in turbans and cummerbunds, who were maintained, however, on little, as they slept on mats, on the stairs, in the verandah, or anywhere,

and lived chiefly on a little rice; but then every servant seemed to have a servant or two of his own, who did for him all the work that he could delegate unknown to "Missy Lena, the mem sahib;" and all this cumbrous establishment, together with the ostentatious style adopted by Europeans in India, formed a vast change after the quiet little Rectory House at home, with only the poor and the parochial children to oversee.

India did not seem to agree with Lena. She was beautiful still, but extremely pale, and there were times—perhaps of weariness, when Jack thought with sorrow, that she was growing almost—shall we say it?—*passée*—yet he loved her not the less. *Passée* at five-and-twenty!

At the dinner party she had looked charming, in pure white, with strings of fine pearls in her dark hair, and the Champac ornaments of yellow gold filigree work, sent her by the Delhi princes.

Dickey Rivers, in a boyish spirit of mischief, often tormented his cousin about Harrower, as Kate informed the latter, who felt grateful to the little Ensign, but when contrasting his five feet eleven inches with the boy's under-stature, he could not help laughing, for Dick's plea that he "felt himself bound to assist the views of a brother officer."

Harrover was not a successful lover, hence he was full of wild and tormenting fears and suspicions, that were the very fathers of the thoughts, which in his cooler and more reasoning moments, he thrust aside as ungenerous and absurd. Among other things, there were times when he trembled with anger, lest Rudkin might have written to Lena already; but then he knew she would disdain to answer him—or hoped that she would not do so; but he dreaded most a second exertion of that power and influence, which had been so fatal to them both, once before. Moreover, he had nearly lost confidence in himself, and often cursed the hour that had sent him up the Jumna, on detachment to Delhi.

Each day that he resolved to bring matters to a final end with Lena, visitors, or some fortuitous circumstance would mar the interview, and he had decided not to trust to writing. One day it was a snake which had been found coiled up under Kate's bed, and all the household were in a state of excitement, hunting it from place to place, and beating it with sticks and bamboos, till it was fairly killed at last.

Another day duty would interfere; he would be for guard, or piquet, for patrol, or a court martial for the trial of some refractory Sepoy, or it arose from the arrival or departure of letters by Calcutta

for the overland mail ; and then Harrower would sigh, for save very distant relations of whom he seldom or never heard, his friends in England were all dead. The railway was now superseding the dawk-boat which bore the mail once ; but the dawk-wallah, or postman, with his bags, was no source of excitement to him now, for they brought him nothing but perhaps a letter from some old chum or brother officer down the country at Allahabad, Barrackpore, or Calcutta, or from some forgotten creditor in the latter city of palaces. Yet Jack could remember the gush of salt tears through which he read his mother's first letter in the camp before we fought the battle of Ferozeshah.

Save his friends of the regimental mess, all his hopes and ideas were centred in the Westons now.

"Time has passed on, Rowley," said he to Mellon ; "and though not a daily visitor at the house of the Westons, I am, as you know, always a welcome one."

"I am sure of that, Jack."

"I ride with the girls or beside their carriage on the course ; am with them at the promenades by the band-stand and when shopping in the bazaar, or in Chandney Choke ; but Lena, who

knows my secret and divines my purpose, has studiously never permitted it to come about, that we are left together for a moment, so, Rowley, you see, it is time wasted with me."

"Have patience, old fellow."

"She will never give me an opportunity of speaking on the subject nearest my heart. Free as she is, why should this system be, unless—unless—it is, because that man, too, is free."

"Hope for the best, my dear fellow," urged Mellon; "such a steady regard as yours merits a good reward."

"Yes, Mellon, and hope I shall. I have, I think, a trust, a confidence, that will enable me to endure as much, perhaps, as I have already endured. Such a girl as Lena is not to be lightly won, I suppose. I do not know—I never loved any other. I can but hope and wait—wait and work on."

A pair of worsted slippers, beautifully worked, were sent to him as "a present from Polly;" but on thanking that lively and golden-haired little Hebe, she vehemently protested that she had done no more "than embroider one tiny little flower on each; the rest—the whole, indeed—had

been done by Lena, and Lena only, who had been at work on them ever since he had paid his first visit."

Lena seemed very much provoked by this assertion of Polly's, and contrived to keep still more out of Harrower's way. Thus he paid three entire visits without seeing her.

"Don't mind that, Jack," said Mellon; "'woman's a changeful and a various thing;' and this present of the slippers is very encouraging, at all events."

"It was, perhaps, only a polite return for the pencil sketch, which, I suppose, she has, ere now, tossed into some drawer and forgotten," grumbled Harrower.

"A little time will show what she means."

"For three visits I have not seen her," replied the other, who was seriously in a pet; "I am a great muff, I fear, and wish the General would send me back to head-quarters out of this stupid Delhi."

"We are to have a scamper on horseback round the city, and, through the silver square to-morrow evening," said Mellon; "come with us."

"For what end?"

"I'll contrive that you and Lena shall pair off

together, or the deuce is in it. I'll tiff with you early, and we'll ride from the cantonments together."

"Thanks, old fellow—you're very kind," sighed Harrower, who was seldom two days—perhaps two hours—in the same mood of mind now.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST CHANCE.

WHEN Harrower and Mellon arrived at Dr. Weston's on the following evening and dismounted at the gate, they found Dicky Rivers, and Polly in her riding-habit, seated under the verandah, shooting with the *goolale*, a species of Indian bow, which propelled balls of sun-dried clay with considerable accuracy, and they were now using them, greatly to the annoyance of the huge, solemn adjutant-birds on the terrace and garden wall, but they ceased this occupation, less on the appearance of their friends, than of a kind of funeral procession that now approached them between the gorgeous parterres of the Indian garden.

This was little Willie, his eyes inflamed by weeping, who came past, drawing a toy cart, wherein lay a little dog quite dead and covered by

a piece of matting. In rear, with stoical gravity, and with a shovel on his shoulder, marched Sergeant Ryder, of Harrower's Company—the same Phil Ryder of a previous chapter—in his undress uniform. Willie was led by the ayah, who rejoiced in the name of Safiya bint Hoyai, (one of the wives of the Prophet,) though, oddly enough, she was of Hindoo race, but low caste perhaps.

It was a tiny terrier which Harrower had given to Lena when they were at home, and for all the years of Willie's little life, it had been his companion and playfellow; so now, as the dog had died—a poisonous snake had bitten it—Gypsy was to be buried, and Willie, in all sincerity of heart, was acting the part of chief mourner, drawing the dog in his cart with swollen eyes and many a backward glance, while Phil Ryder was to perform the duty of sexton, as none of the household would bury an unclean animal, and it might have been deemed sacrilege to cast it into the adjacent Jumna, a tributary of the Holy Ganges.

Harrower was weak enough to consider the dog's death at this crisis as a species of bad omen.

"Poor little Gyp!" said Polly, lifting the mat for a moment, while her blue eyes filled with tears; "she was the dearest and kindest dog in

the whole world! Where are you going to bury her?"

"Among these oleanders and acacias, miss," replied the sergeant, saluting her, while Willie, as if impatient of intrusion on his griefs, drew away the cart towards the spot indicated, where Ryder dug a hole, and lifted—he did not throw—the dog in.

"There's a collar on it, Master Willie—shall I take it off?" asked the good-natured sergeant.

"No—oh no," cried Willie, to whom this would seem something like an act of sacrilege; "I could never, never see the collar off poor Gyp—poor Gyp," he added, sobbing, "especially if it was put on another dog—and, oh! how I should hate that other dog!"

So the little English terrier was buried sufficiently deep to prevent it being raked up by the prowling jackals, and Willie lingered near the place after Ryder had sodded it nicely over, and retired, watching with a mournful face the pink and white blossoms of the oleanders falling on the grave of his playfellow, till Harrower, who was quite as good-natured as his sergeant, led him away.

Other persons had seen all this trivial affair, the interment of the dog, an unclean animal, and viewed it with considerable disgust and scorn;

these were the Doctor's kitmutgar and Baboo Bulli Sing, of the Delhi Palace, who was in conference with the valet at the outer gate of the garden ; but on the appearance of the Doctor and his other two daughters equipped for riding, they separated, and with some precipitation Bulli Sing galloped away.

"Willie, Willie," said the benevolent Doctor, as the child buried his weeping face in Lena's skirts and refused to be comforted, and even Polly betrayed an emotion that would have surprised the warlike Mussulman who had just retired.

"It is not perhaps a very becoming thing to mourn for a mere dog," said the Doctor, while patting her cheek ; "but when for years, Harrower, ever since you gave us that dog at home in England, the poor animal has faithfully followed our footsteps ; and when the gentle, almost intellectual endowments which kind nature has bestowed upon a domesticated dog are considered, with its sagacity and courage, its disinterestedness and fidelity, its readiness to follow its master in snow and storm, its perfect obedience to man,—the animal which of all the brute creation voluntarily leaves its kindred to associate with man, which watches his departing steps and greets them when returning, which day by

day has been by his side and hung about him, then, I say, even a dog's death warrants an emotion of regret,—aye, of sorrow, and see how keenly poor little Willie feels it."

"By Jove, Polly," whispered Rivers, "your papa has turned on the steam for a funeral sermon! But here come the syces with our cavalry."

The report of the dog's interment was whispered abroad in Delhi among the natives at this crisis, with many absurd exaggerations, as an actual religious ceremony, performed by the padre, Weston Sahib—a dog, which was declared by the prophet to be unclean! So this profanation by the Weston household, was nearly a source of as much secret speculation as Queen Victoria's greased cartridges.

The party mounted and set forth.

Lena's riding habit, like Kate's, was of plain brown holland, beautifully cut and braided with blue; it showed all the outline, the grace and beauty of her bust and arms, and was pleasantly suggestive of extreme coolness. Her riding hat was white straw, with a long, drooping ostrich feather, and under it, the masses of her glorious dark hair were braided and coiled away to perfection, by the clever fingers of Safiyah, her Hindoo ayah. Two champac ear-rings of exquisite Delhi

gold, dangled from her tiny ears, and were her only ornaments. Her tight riding gauntlets were of yellow kid, and Harrower thought he never saw her look so well.

The Indian afternoon was in all its splendour; the atmosphere was pleasantly warm, but nothing more, and in a group they made their way to the course, which was already crowded by the civil, military, and mercantile community of Delhi, European, Eurasian, and Native—white, yellow, brown, black, and cream coloured, on horseback, in carriages, phaetons, and palanquins. There were London harness, saddles and chariots, and soft-featured English women, reclining back in them, luxuriously and wearily, showing but too plainly that the fierce heats and moist seasons of India were too much for them, and that their cheeks had lost their roses, which not even the pure breeze of the Welsh valleys, or the Scottish mountains, or the green Ridings of Yorkshire, could restore now.

There were fast young officers from the cantonments, in smart buggies with large wheels and high stepping horses; showy coaches from Calcutta, with black Parsee merchants, in bright silk gaberdines and high conical caps; wealthy, fat, and sensual looking Hindoo and Mussulman zemindars and traders; brown ayahs with sickly,

white-faced children, and officers in every species of undress uniform with cork helmets; and many ladies, new arrivals from Europe—like the Leslies—in tasteful riding habits, with broad hats and ostrich feathers.

It was a gay sight, with Delhi as a background, its gorgeous domes and spires, its ramparts, mosques and minarets, shining and glittering under the full blaze of an Oriental sun.

As the Westons were a considerable source of attraction, many joined their party, or lingered with it for a time; but Harrower found, that though he rode with Lena on his right hand, that Polly was generally on his left; at last he hoped to get rid of the latter young lady when Eversly approached them, mounted on a beautiful flea-bitten Arab, for which he had paid two thousand rupees (about two hundred pounds) at Gazepore, and wearing his white undress uniform, and a solar topee, or sun hat, so like a mushroom, that it would have spoiled almost any other face than his, which was a very handsome one.

"You know Eversly—Horace Eversly, of the 54th?" asked Lena.

"Perfectly," said Harrower.

"Of course—everybody does."

"Droll fellow, isn't he?" added Polly.

"Droll? I should rather say solemn, and horribly affected."

"That is what I mean. He actually made his native servants wear white kid gloves at table; did you ever hear of such a thing in India?"

"No, Polly, certainly," said Harrower, laughing at the idea of Ferukh Pandey's copper-coloured digits being so covered.

Nothing was gained by the accession of Eversly, for on pairing off with Polly, who began to flirt with him furiously to tease Rivers, who had somehow piqued her, Dr. Weston, who, worthy man, never conceived he could possibly be in the way, took her place beside Harrower and his eldest daughter.

By many a glance there could be no mistaking, by many a slight pressure of the hand—very slight indeed; by many a modulation of the voice, and venturing lightly to touch her arm—even her shoulder—had Harrower made Lena aware of the deep interest he still felt in her.

If it be true that a woman is quick "to see when a man admires her—nay, that she can tell whether it be mere admiration or love that animates him; moreover, that the discovery is sure to give her an interest in him, even though she may feel that he can never be *more* to her than he is at that moment:" if all this is the case,

how strange and deep were the emotions and convictions of Lena Weston, on finding that her once accepted and so ill-used lover, was again by her side, and was only watching for the moment when he might again address her as of old.

Kate and Mellon were together, and were looking so bright and happy ! These two had nothing to look back upon with regret or doubt, but had all to look forward to, with joy and hope ; so Kate was always happy—quietly happy in the society of her lover.

Mellon seemed to have forgotten all concerning his promise of bringing about by a little tact, a *tête-à-tête* between Lena and Harrower, so the latter, as he saw the evening passing away, and the course gradually emptying, began to despair of its occurrence at all.

He had a strange presentiment of approaching evil, which weighed upon his mind and oppressed even his tongue. Such forebodings of coming events occur at times, and it is in vain to attempt to investigate them, or account for the philosophy of such emotions, any more than of those visions of sleep, which the superstitious term prophetic dreams. We can but admit that presentiments of coming evil *have* existed in all times, less among Englishmen, perhaps, than their country-

men of the northern kingdom. Yet Shakespeare makes the Queen say in "Richard III."—

"——— Methinks

Some unborn sorrow ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
With something trembles, yet at nothing grieves,
More than with parting from my lord the King."

At last they entered the city, and rode through Chandney Choke, a magnificent street, which is ninety feet broad, and nearly a mile in length, and parallel with which runs an aqueduct, shaded by many beautiful trees, and watered from the canal of Ali Merdan Khan.

In scenic effect, perhaps nothing can surpass the varied and stirring aspect of this long and glorious thoroughfare, the vast perspective of which was lost amid a cluster of shining domes, and in the golden haze of a sunset, that fell in broad flakes of warm light athwart every opening and break in the masses of its light and singular architecture.

Horses, camels, elephants, splendidly caparisoned, were passing to and fro, their harness gorgeous with deep scarlet or yellow fringes, silver bosses and golden bells. There were growling cheetahs for hunting, led about for sale in chain leashes, dancing fakirs, itinerant beggars, singing gibberish to the monotonous patter of the tom-tom or In-

dian drum; and palanquins and bullock-carts went hither and thither, among crowds of box-wallahs or native hawkers of every imaginable commodity, clad in clean dresses of white muslin, with their goods or trays on the upper coil of their turbans; water carriers with red cummerbunds, and great leathern bags slung on their bare, brown shoulders, with the mouth under their right arm; peons or messengers with their belts and badges; there too, were the European soldier in his shell jacket and orthodox glazed stock, and the yellow-visaged sepoy wearing the same uniform, and looking exceedingly uncomfortable therein; and everywhere were swarms of nearly black children, nude as they came into the world, gambolling like imps in the dust, flying paper kites, or making dirt pies (chupatties they called them) exactly like their unbelieving brethren of the western world, and in the same felicitous place—the nearest gutter.

And that the warlike and picturesque might not be wanting, at times there flashed in the sunlight a spear-head, or a glittering helmet of Moorish form, as some horseman in his tippet of mail and chain-shirt, looking like an Emir of Granada, came spurring on, announcing the return of the Princes of Delhi, Mirza Mogul and

Mirza Abubeker, from evening prayer at the Jumua Musjid, with all their suwarri.

And those royal personages soon appeared, amid a cloud of dust, the spears, turbans, chain-shirts, sabres, tulwars, and silver-bossed shields of their mounted escort flashing in the sun, around their handsome and well-hung carriage, with a horde of wild looking peons rushing along on foot, yelling out their titles in the usual fashion.

Baboo Sing and Captain Douglas were of course in the rear.

On this occasion, the Princes were accompanied by a pair of gigantic silver kettle-drums; slung on a white elephant of vast size, which trumpeted dolefully as it was goaded along at a rapid trot. This insignia of empire always formed of old the chief feature in the cavalcade of an eastern king, and its revival was considered somewhat significant at this remarkable juncture of Indian politics.

The hurly-burly with which these folks swept past, scattered and somewhat deranged the order of our equestrian party.

They had raised a frightful cloud of white dust, and to avoid it Harrower took Lena's bridle, and turned her horse aside into a narrow and more secluded street, overlooked by two great palaces,

which in former days had been the dwellings of two of the chief omrahs of the empire.

When they emerged again, the dust had subsided, but their friends were gone.

At last they were alone, and entirely together, and Harrower's heart beat painfully.

"They have quite left us behind," said Lena, laughing to conceal her perplexity, "and the sun has set."

"Yes—there goes the evening gun from the flag-staff tower."

"And in ten minutes more darkness will have set in."

"Ah—we have no delicious twilight evenings here, as at home in England, Miss Weston."

She was about to whip up her horse, as they had now reached the end of the vast street, and turned into one less frequented and less bustling, which led to their house near the Jumna, when Harrower checked his horse, and arrested her hand, retaining it in his own.

"Lena—dear Lena," said he, in a tremulous voice, "I would speak with you on a subject which—which—Lena, do you hear me?"

She did not hear him!

She was abstracted; her teeth were clenched, her face was pale, her muscles rigid, and her eyes were fixed on an officer who was riding past at

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a slow trot, with one hand in a sling. Crape was on his left arm, and on the hilt of his sword.

He bowed, lifting his cap as he passed, and something like an imprecation rose to Harrower's lips.

The rider was Colonel Mark Rudkin !

CHAPTER XII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

“BLESSED be God, the great work goes bravely on!” exclaimed Prince Mirza Mogul, as he twisted an amber rosary round his left wrist, “and the day is at hand when the green flag of the only true Prophet of God shall wave over India, from the mouths of the Ganges to Cabul and Cashmere, and from the plains of Delhi to the Straits of Manara, and Hindoos and Guebers shall alike bow beneath it!”

“And when will that day arrive, for already the 10th of April, when more than two millions of Hindoos were bathing in the gate of the Ganges, at Hurdwar, is past?” said Baboo Bulli Sing.

“Fear not—the day will come inexorably, my brother.”

“You honour me, most high—pardon my impatience—but *when?*” persisted the other, with a leer in his black, glittering eye.

“When the hundred years have elapsed since

Surajah ud Dowlah was defeated by Clive Sahib (may dogs defile his tomb), on the plains of Plassey. It will be the first day of a new moon—so say astrologers—and therefore will be auspicious to us as Mahommedans; and it will be the Ruth Juttra of the Hindoos!”

“Then we are already within two moons of that time, even by the computation of the accursed Feringhees.”

“In one hundred years will be the fulness of time—the time decreed by fate,” said Prince Mirza Abubeker, who had not yet spoken, but who had sat smoking his gorgeous hookah in dreamy thought; “and now we may admit the messengers and the bearers of vakeels, who come to the foot of our father’s throne, from a thousand tribes and territories.”

As there were only about forty of those personages to be received, this speech was merely a piece of Oriental hyperbole.

These remarks were made in the great hall of the palace of Delhi—the *dewan-khana*, or levée room—on that night, when Captain Harrower, on returning to the cantonments from Dr. Weston’s house, for the first time in his Indian experiences, found all his servants absent, and that he was left to shift for himself; and the prediction referred to, was one industriously circulated throughout

the East, by dancing dervishes, wandering fakirs, and moolahs, that *our power would pass away* in the hundredth year after the great battle of Plassey, when Lord Clive, with a handful of Europeans, sixty seamen, and eight guns (his chief force being the brave old 39th, or Dorsetshire—*Primus in Indis*, as their colours tell us still), won the most splendid of our Indian victories, on the 23rd of June, 1757, routing the Nabob of Bengal, with forty thousand horse and foot, and forty pieces of cannon !

And the night in question was one towards the end of April, 1857.

The palace of the Moguls, which was built on the west bank of the Jumna, by the Shah Jehan, in the sixteenth century, is more than a mile in circumference, and is surrounded by a deep ditch and an embattled wall, of red granite, thirty feet high, loop-holed for cannon, musketry, and arrows. It stands on a spacious esplanade, and is approached by that great street through which flows the canal made by Ali Merdan Khan, the Persian Governor of Candahar, who was so rich that he was supposed to possess the philosopher's stone, and whose magnificent aqueduct conveyed the waters of the Jumna to Delhi, from their pure source in the mountains, one hundred and twenty miles distant.

Against the sky, the outline of the palace presents a remarkable cluster of beautiful, but unmeaning, minarets and steep domes ; and Bishop Heber asserts, that, except in durability of material, it far excels the castle of Windsor in extent and splendour.

Outside its walls there were sentinels clad in the ordinary scarlet uniform of the late East India Company's service, and on this April night, the guards were furnished by the 54th Regiment of Native Infantry ; but the internal duties, and indeed, nearly all the police arrangements of Delhi were performed by two native battalions in the pay of the king, and entirely under his control. These men were officered and disciplined in the European manner, but retained their Asiatic dress ; they were armed with matchlocks and sabres, and were commanded by the redoubtable Baboo Bulli Sing, a ferocious and unscrupulous fellow, whom the wholesome terror of British law kept within moderate bounds, and from committing many an extravagant act of blood and outrage, which were the genuine promptings of his Oriental nature and education.

Baboo Bulli was, however, a man of undoubted courage, as his patronymic of Sing, which means a lion, imports. He was bearer of the *Jerryput*, a small swallow-tailed standard of cloth of gold,

not larger than a handkerchief—a badge of empire, never displayed (like the oriflamme of St. Denis) but when the king took the field in person. Baboo was an expert horseman, and could handle his weapons skilfully. Riding at full speed, he had been known to receive on the point of his sword or spear, an orange, which had been tossed into air; and with one blow of a finely tempered Coorg sabre, to hew through a half-inch iron bar, and to slice a man's head to the chin, like a ripe water melon.

He was not tall, but his lithe figure was mere bone and brawn. His limbs were lean and muscular; but this attenuation, the result of constant exercise, was not observable in his costume, loose white drawers, and a tunic of scarlet silk, over which he wore a shirt of fine steel rings, an antiquated defence, even in that part of India, now; and, on the night in question, he had donned in lieu of his steel skull cap, a white turban, with a diamond aigrette and white feather, in its purity, contrasting strongly with the dark, copper-coloured and ferocious visage over which it drooped.

In addition to the troops he commanded, was the Palace Guard of Delhi, under Captain Douglas, whose post was yet to cost him dear; but all these men were carefully excluded from the Dewan-khana, all the avenues to which, on

this important night, were guarded by the Soubadar Baboo's chosen troops alone.

The hall of audience is entirely built of snow-white marble ; it is of vast size, and has a species of terrace running round it ; mosaic work, arabesques in brilliant colours adorn it, and sculptures in relievo, like those in the adjacent mosque of Aurungzebe, which is also of white marble and of exquisite workmanship. It once had a roof of silver, which was torn down by the Mahrattas when they stormed Delhi, and on being coined into rupees, it yielded seventeen lacs.*

A ceiling of rose-coloured silk was drawn over it now, and under this, there burned many wax-lights, the perfume of which, mingled with the attar of roses—the pure creamy and oily essence from the vast rose-fields which are kept by the Zemindars at Gazepore for the express purpose of distillation, and this was lavishly sprinkled about by attendant girls. Pastilles of sandal wood, and of the sweet scented grass of Cashmere, were smouldering in silver burners along the cornices, and the entire hall was redolent with intoxicating and voluptuous perfumes.

In the centre of this wonderful place stood the empty throne of the king of Delhi, for he did not appear, being old and almost a myth, though the

* Bohn's India.

great and secret centre of the growing conspiracy.

It was a howdah or seat, upon the back of a great marble tiger, covered by a sheet of cloth of gold; the ascent was by steps covered with polished silver plates, and every fastening was of the same precious metal. The eyes of the tiger were balls of red glass, but its claws and teeth were of polished steel. Within the howdah was a sentence from the Koran worked in pearls upon velvet of green, the holy colour; and the canopy above it had a deep fringe composed of strings of pearls alone.

It was surmounted by the figure of a gigantic bird of Paradise, or peacock, the beak of which was a large emerald; its eyes were carbuncles, and its breast was a mass of diamonds which sparkled with wonderful beauty, in the light of the many wax candles in the candelabra and crystal chandeliers, which were thickly placed or hung about the hall. Such was the throne of the King, Emperor and Padisha of Delhi, who now began to weary of being a pensioner of the British Government.

On each side of this empty seat of royalty, were two chairs of gold filigree work, having swivel rests for the elbows and knees. In these, seated *à la turque*, and under a canopy, were the

Princes Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, richly dressed and armed, their sleepy sensual eyes filled with unusual animation, and their dusky, somewhat flabby faces, flushed with as much excitement, as it was possible for their blasé natures to feel.

On the verge of the Persian carpet that lay before the throne, were two secretaries squatted cross-legged with writing materials spread before them. These consisted of good English paper, and papier mache pen-cases from Cashmere, porcupine quills and inkstands, on desks inlaid with ivory from Bombay; but beyond the names of those to be present, they were ordered to note—nothing.

Sabre in hand, Baboo Bulli Sing stood near them, grasping the staff of Jerryput, which was *cased* as yet.

In the marble wall behind the throne were openings filled in with fine brass wire, where at times, the ladies of the zenana were permitted to peep (without being seen) into the Dewan-khana; but on this night only the flash of a sabre, or the gleam of a bayonet could be detected there, as even those avenues were guarded by armed men.

Near the throne burned sacred brass lamps of peacock form, which had served for a time, in the tomb of Homaion—doomed yet to be a place of

the sternest retribution to those two Princes of Delhi.

Worthy Captain Douglas, walking to and fro on the esplanade in the moonlight, enjoying a fragrant manilla, and playing with his Scotch terrier, though he saw that the horseshoe-shaped windows of the great hall, were filled with light, could little conceive the plot that was being schemed out therein.

"Admit the messengers, and the bearers of the Kereetahs," repeated Mirza Abubeker, as he and his brother spread their jewelled fingers over their knees, and relinquished to the pipe bearers their hookahs, which were of the finest Bidri ware, the snakes or coils being covered with threads of silk and gold.

A scarlet silk curtain which served the place of a door was drawn back, revealing a shifting mass of varied colours beyond, and the flashing of arms and jewels, between a long vista of grotesque columns alternately of red granite and white marble; and then entered noiselessly, and with many a profound salaam, a very singular, and striking, but certainly motley collection of copper-coloured personages, all of whom bowed nearly to the floor, as they approached the princes.

First came the filthy Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, in his yellow shirt with red ochre smudged over his

cheeks and nose, and the living snake twisting and writhing round his waist. Near him shuffled in Ferukh Pandy and the kitmutgar of Dr. Weston, both looking and feeling somewhat scared, by the presence in which they suddenly found themselves. Then came many native officers and sepoy of different regiments, some of them the disbanded mutineers of Barrackpore, and some from the adjacent cantonments, who had been passed out of the quarters, after hours, by sentinels who were in the growing conspiracy ; many of those men were in their full uniform, and had on their breasts the silver medals of the campaigns of the Sutledge and elsewhere—the battles of Ferozeshah, Sobraon and Chillianwallah, and all bearing on one side, the head of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria—the Feringhee woman who now made greased cartridges.

Among these people towered a venerable Hindoo of powerful figure, but somewhat savage aspect, and who had under his tunic, an almost entire suit of the chain mail, worn until after the beginning of the present century by the Mahratta cavalry. His bearing, aspect and arms, declared him to be a native of the hardy and warlike district of Nagpore—of a people whose only arms were wont to be the sword and spear—their only camp-furniture a horse cloth.

This man, whose head and face were completely shaven after the custom of his country, was the secret emissary of the Nana of Bithoor—Nana Sahib of atrocious memory!

There were many zemindars or landholders present, whose shawls were of embroidered silk, their scarfs and turbans of Dacca muslin, their jackets of Chinese fabrics of gorgeous colours; and these costumes with their jewels and precious stones, in the form of brooches, buttons, aigrettes and the studdings of pistol butts, and the hilts or scabbards of sabres, daggers and tulwars—their dark expressive faces, gleaming black eyes, and lanky mustaches, made as a whole a striking and most picturesque group.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT TRANSPIRED IN THE DEWAN-KHANA.

"WHAT pray you of us—speak?" said the elder brother (whose title of Mirza meant simply Sir or Lord) of the crowd which stood reverentially on the extreme verge of the carpet before the throne.

"We come," said the Dervish Falladeen, whose prefix of Hafiz means 'one who has committed the Koran to memory,' "to arrange for the extirpation of those who would seek to defile and destroy the faith of Moslem and Hindoo alike, by the confusion of caste and religion."

"Seek the aid of Heaven, O Hafiz," replied Prince Abubeker, as cunningly as if he had heard of all this for the first time.

On this the Dervish, after whirling round several times, with arms outspread and skirts extended, and exhibiting the while a wonderful velocity and skill in preserving his equili-

brium, threw up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed with a loud voice :

“Grant thine aid, O Allah, to us, and to all who aid the religion of Mahommed, and let us at the last day be of that chosen number! Destroy those white-faced Kauffirs who would defile the religion of the Prophet, and at the last day let us *not* be of their excluded number. What says the Koran? ‘He who prayeth unto me, his prayer shall be granted.’ Hence, the fruit of a new and just design, that this land of the true and great Mogul, though defiled by the presence of heretics, shall be protected like the ark of Noah, and saved like it, from utter destruction. Lords and masters, is it not written, *Kauffir, Kerauz, Kulb*,—brute, swine, and dog,—heretics and all their brethren, dogs and all their tribes, swine and all their race, are impure? And shall we Mussulmans and Hindoos mingle with the Feringhees who are lower than all these? Forbid it the Prophet! Forbid it Brahma!” he added, turning with a special reverence to the old Mah-ratta chief, and much more fustian of the same kind followed, exciting deep and wrathful murmurs among his hearers, and much clashing and clattering of weapons.

“God is great,” said Prince Mogul, bowing his head, “and great is Vishnu—not that we believe

in the accursed idol," he added, under his beard, to the soubadar Baboo Sing.

"Heaven forbid!" responded that personage, in the same low tone.

With all his apparently fervid Mahommedanism, the Dervish was simply a cunning, a time-serving rascal—one of those hypocrites who exist in all countries, and use religion as a means to an end. He wore that loathsome serpent about his person only to gain favour with the Hindoos, to whom now, like the Egyptians of old, the snake is sacred, and is symbolically placed in the hands of the god Seva, as a destroying power. By this sign he extorted as many pagodas from the Hindoo sepoys as he did rupees from their Mahommedan comrades, and shared both freely enough at festival times, among the dancing girls, fortune-tellers, and serpent charmers, with other rabble of the bazaars and "back slums" of Delhi, which could boast of such purlieus, like every other large city in the world.

Both the Delhi Princes, or shahzadas, were well educated, and, like Nana Sahib, spoke English pretty well; but on this occasion, of course, they used that polyglot gibberish known as Hindostanee, which is made up of several languages.

"Welcome in the name of God are Mussulman and Hindoo alike, to the Dewan Khana of Delhi,"

said Prince Mogul, salaaming with his hands, but still remaining seated, while bowing his turbanned head, like a China mandarin. "Be assured, O people! that the sun and dignity of splendour shall arise from this time—the dawn of glory and success, when the sins of the Feringhees will return on their own heads, with that terrible punishment which is their due. Heaven only permits for a time, and for its own mysterious purposes, the inferior to rule over the superior, as those people do over us, and that allotted period in Hindostan is coming to its long-predicted close! Now indeed is the time to drive these English from the land of Mahommed and the Hindoo; cut down the dying tree, and its branches will soon be cast into the fire. Even their very ashes will soon pass away. By preparing cartridges with cows' grease for the Hindoos, and others with that of swine for the Mahommedans, ordering them to bite these with their teeth, or tear them with their fingers, the Feringhees and their ruler—a woman, O soul of Homaion!—have sought to taint the caste and confound the faith of all! Be this our cause for battle and revolt, as it was in the days of Vellore, when Craddock Sahib ordered the Hindoo sepoys to shave off their beards, to wear Christian hats, and wash from their foreheads the painted *tilluck*, by which Vishnu was

to know them at the day of Doom.* The Sultan of Roum, the King of Egypt, and even Brigadier Napoleon, are with us, and shall we omit now to fill our tents with the gold mohurs, and the white-skinned girls of the Europeans? India shall be the grave of the Feringhees, and not one shall go home to their little island in the mists beyond the sea, to say how the others have perished!"

Religious rancour, hatred of race and colour alone, and no pure or high-souled sentiment of nationality animated the prince's hearers; and the objects of many were rendered plain enough by the mode in which, in their murmurs of applause, they rang the changes on "*deen, deen,*" and "*loot-loot*"—religion, faith, and—plunder!

"The great zemindars (land-holders), and even the humble ryots, the tillers of the soil, are with us heart and soul," said Abubeker.

"On their heads be it if they are not," commented the dervish, sternly.

"Every sepoy who slays a Christian shall receive an anklet of gold; and for each officer's head a bag of rupees," said the younger prince, who seemed the most cruel of the two brothers, for he had a narrow forehead, enormous jaw, and small, fierce eyes.

"Death to all!" yelled the dervish, whirling

* Cause of the Mutiny at Vellore in 1806.

round with frightful velocity ; “ to European and Eurasian, and to Christians of every race and colour ! ”

In a low but impressive voice, Baboo Sing added, after a pause—

“ These are the sacred commands issued by Mirza Mogul and Mirza Abubeker, in the name of the King of Delhi.”

“ What saith the Koran of unbelievers ? ” began the dervish again ; “ ‘ kill them wherever ye find them, and turn them out of that whereof they have dispossessed you, for temptation to idolatry is more grievous than slaughter.—Whoever shall turn his back upon his religion, and become an infidel, shall become their companion in hell-fire, and remain therein for ever ! ’ ” *

“ Let us now hear what the Nana of Bithoor has to say to all this,” said Prince Mogul, with a low salaam, (as he grew weary of the dervish’s cant), for Nana usually is the title given to the King of the Mahrattas, but more properly means the head of a state and commander of troops.

“ Most high,” said the tall and closely-shaven old Mahratta in the antique chain shirt, as he came forward, bending over an enormous tulwar ; “ the Nana Seereek Dhoondoo Punth desires you to be assured by me, Azimoolah Khan, that he is

* Koran, Chapter II.

with you in all things; that he considers the English but as low caste usurpers, and as tyrants who seek to degrade India, to rob its inhabitants, and subvert their usages, as they mock, in their ignorance, all that which is not English. The number of horse, foot, and cannon, which he may be able to bring forth by the appointed time, are stated in his letter within this kereetah."

Kneeling, he handed to Mogul the latter, a case of tissue and green silk, in which missives to persons of rank are usually enclosed.

Mogul glanced at it hurriedly, and with an air of supreme satisfaction handed it to his brother, who said—

"Bear our warmest thanks and wishes to the Nana; in due time a phirmaun will be sent him, with the final instructions of our father, the King; and may the shadow of God be over you as you go back by the iron engine of the Feringhee, whose speed puts the ekhas of our fathers to shame."

"May Brahma long shower down the choicest favours on the King and people of Delhi!" exclaimed the old Mahratta chief, as he retired.

The princes bowed, for, though Mahommedans, at this great crisis they were not above cultivating and flattering the followers of Vishnu, who numbered so many millions.

"And now," said the elder brother, with a

sleek and cunning smile, "shall we hear what our faithful sepoy have to tell us?"

This caused some commotion among a group of sepoy officers and soldiers who were clustered together in close and earnest conversation; and a havildar, or sergeant, now, came forward.

He was a small-boned, spare, and active-looking man, about forty years of age; his eyes, hair, and whiskers were jet black, and his mustachios were of such enormous length, that they were carried over his small gold-fringed shoulder-straps, or scales, and tied behind, imparting an almost grotesque expression of ferocity to a face that was stolid enough in expression till he became excited, when his eyes shone with a terrible glare. He had seen much service, as the medals indicated, on the breast of his scarlet uniform, which was faced with yellow.

Betelnut rendered his copper-like skin darker than its natural hue. He wore his shako with its brass ornaments, his buff-belt and sword-bayonet, and a pair of large, loose, white cotton gloves, and he seemed at perfect ease when led forward by Baboo Bulli Sing, and introduced as

"Pershad Sing, a Hindoo sergeant from the cantonments."

"Most high," said he, with a profound military salute, "the Soubadar Major, of the 54th Native

Infantry, sends his compliments, his most humble and lowly salaam to the Mighty King of Delhi, through me, as duty renders his attendance here to-night impossible."

"This is unfortunate, havildar; but what is your message?" asked Mogul.

"The havildars, naicks, and sepoyes of the 54th will be true to their salt, their faith, and to him who is the refuge of the world."

"Good—this is well!"

"They hold to the purity of the caste, and are ready to revolt."

"Deen—deen!" was now heard on every side, and more than one fat and sensual Hindoo zemindar woke up from the standing doze, induced by Indian hemp and French brandy.

"Chup! chup!" (silence) thundered Baboo Sing, striking on the floor the standard pole he grasped.

"Ah, your regiment is ready to revolt?"

"But the men will *not* murder their Feringhee officers."

A growl of rage followed this unexpected assertion.

"They are all kind to us, they and their Mem Sahibs, who are good to our wives and our little ones, and give us rupees, and even gold mohurs for *our* festivals, and fat Patna sheep and rice at

the feast of Eed for *yours*. We love the Colonel, Ripley Sahib, as our father, and we must be true to our salt."

"And you will not slay them?"

"No—but the men of any *other* regiment may," replied the sergeant, with a grin, while his eyes assumed the expression of those of a shark or a cobra-capello, so keen, cold-blooded, and snaky were they in their deliberate malignity.

"And you will not oppose this other regiment?" asked Abubeker, whose eyes caught something of the same fiendish light.

"We shall not."

"Good; then your scruples are easily got over. It is well, Pershad Sing; and you will find that the King of Delhi is a better paymaster than the Company in the end. Among the native officers we shall revive the old Khans of Delhi, who, on receiving their title from the king, had each to maintain and discipline two hundred and fifty horse for his service, so rewards shall not be wanting. Adieu, havildar; may the protection of Heaven be over you," he added, as this finished traitor salaamed his way into the background.

"Who come next?"

"Messengers from Meerut," replied Baboo Sing, as three soldiers, a sergeant of the 3rd, another of the 11th, and a naick, or corporal, of

the 20th (all regiments of Native Infantry) deserters from Meerut, and apparently Hindoos, came forward, and asserted that the corps they represented were all ready to revolt and slay their officers, without compunction.

"Swear it!" cried the Dervish, doubtfully.

"We swear it, by Brahma, Seva, and Vishnu," cried the three, simultaneously, raising their dingy right hands as they mentioned the three objects of Hindoo idolatry.

"And you swear it by the Holy Ganges, whose waters yet must wash your sins away?"

"By the hoary hair of Mahadera!" they exclaimed together, and this was a fearfully solemn oath, for thus do the Hindoos style those large and hoary icicles in the snow-wall at Gangutri, an icy barrier three hundred feet thick, over the lofty brow of which the Holy River issues from between the five vast peaks of Mahadera, among the Himalaya mountains.

"Our regiments are of opinion," said one, "that we ought to strike when the Christians are unarmed in their churches."

"Hah—these unwashed Feringhees pray but once in seven days, while we, the faithful, pray daily," added another.

Many emissaries from Simlah, Allahabad, Futteypore, and other quarters were received, and

gave similar promises of treachery, cruelty, and bloodshed.

As all these men were to leave the palace and pass into the town or elsewhere without exciting suspicion, they were ushered out by two or three at a time, a precaution almost needless, as nearly all the outer sentinels were in the deadly secret. Perhaps the last questioned was Ferukh Pandy.

"Kitmutgar to Harrower Sahib, speak; your master brought a party of Europeans to strengthen the garrison?" asked Baboo Bulli Sing, haughtily.

"Yes, aga," replied the other, cowering low.

"How long since?"

"Not quite a moon, aga Sahib."

"How many of the unclean were with him?"

"Temple Sahib, a Jemmadar, and three score."

"Bah! they are only a mouthful—you may go."

"And I shall make the blood of Harrower Sahib pay for that of my brother, who was slain at Barrackpore," said Pandy, with a savage grin, as he departed in company with a Fakir.

"But one remains, most high," said Baboo Sing.

"And who is he?" yawned Abubeker.

"The kitmutgar of the padre."

"Weston Sahib—let him approach," said the two princes, suddenly becoming all attention.

"Long live the Refuge of the World!" cried the trembling valet, with his forehead on the extreme verge of the carpet; "I am Assim Aleec."

"You know where the padre's daughters sleep—especially the youngest?" asked Baboo, giving him a sharp poke with the lance of the jerryput, as if to brighten his ideas.

"Aga Sahib, you mean the little Missy Baba Pollee?" said the fellow, with a leering eye, a cringing air, and tightly folded palms.

"Yes; she with the golden hair. You will keep your eyes upon her and on her sisters, and answer for them with your head; for when *the time comes*, all white women and girls are to be brought hither as lawful spoil. Hither, do you hear, within the palace walls," said Baboo, as the princes disdained to speak.

"The wives of the unbelievers are the just prey of the faithful, so saith the forty-ninth chapter of the Koran, which was revealed at Mecca, and is entitled 'She who is tried,'" howled the hideous dervish, who yet lingered by the door.

"As for the men, the tulwar and the bayonet will soon make kabobs of them; and as the padre Weston is so fond of dogs, by the soul of the Prophet, he shall lie in the grave, with a dog's head in lieu of his own!" said Abubeker, clapping his hands at the idea.

"But most high," said the rascally kitmutgar, "one of the eldest daughters is about to be married, and how can I——"

"Married!" exclaimed Mogul, furiously; "and to whom?"

"Mellon Sahib, of the Bengal Fusiliers."

"Good—we shall take care of Mellon Sahib; enough—you may go," said Abubeker, laughing.

The truth was, as the sequel proved, that Mirza Mogul had fixed his mind on placing both Kate and Lena in his own private quarter of the palace, while Abubeker, less covetous, though equally cruel and sordid, resolved to content himself with Polly—poor little Polly, so playful and girlish in her waggery, with her beaming blue eyes, her soft English face, and the rich blood mantling in her cheek, in all the flush of her young and joyous life—she could little imagine the terrible horoscope these great folks were casting for her.

"Ere *sohan*" (the seventh month, or July) "has come and gone, all will be over—all won, or all lost!" said Mogul to his brother, as they rose from their chairs of state, and retired, each wearily to his zenana, for all unused to much exercise of mind and body, fat, puffy, and effete, used-up and blasé Oriental sensualists, the long interview had proved quite enough for them—

and whither they went, we need not follow them.

* * * * *

As each sepoy regiment had a soubadar major, who could act as colonel, a soubadar or captain, a jemmadar or subaltern, and a complete staff of havildars and naicks, or sergeants and corporals, to each company—a cumbrous, dangerous, and useless arrangement—it was quite apparent that when once the European officers were destroyed, the battalion *organization* would still remain perfect in all its parts, and every way fit for service, throughout all the three great native armies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras.

This scene in the dewan-khana proves that Major Abbot, of the 74th Native Infantry, was correct, when he wrote to the effect that the coming insurrection had been organised and matured in the palace of the King of Delhi, and with his full knowledge and sanction, in his rash, but not unnatural desire to re-establish himself in the full and free sovereignty of his native country; and the method adopted was simply that of spreading false and alarming reports, that the British government intended to subvert the religion of the people, first by insidious means, and then to enforce upon them that of Christendom

—a plan of which they had not the most vague idea.

In some points, the Hindoos were even more furious than their Moslem countrymen, while those ideas lasted—especially the princes and land owners.

“High caste Brahmins, all as proud as Lucifer,” says an able writer, “they deemed that of right to them, belonged the treasures and the Empire of India. Hampered with debt, they looked for the day of a general spoliation. Chafing under restraint, they panted to indulge themselves in unbridled licence. They were bent upon the foundation of a gigantic military despotism. They looked forward to the time when soubadars and jemmadars should be maharajahs and nawabs ; when the taxes should be collected by sepoy receivers-general, and paid into sepoy treasuries ; when every private should have his zenana filled with the loveliest daughters of Rohilcund and Lahore ; when great landholders from Bundelcund and Orissa should come with cases of diamonds to buy a favourable decision from Mungal Pandey ; when great merchants from Liverpool and Marseilles should come with bags of sovereigns, to buy leave of Peer Bux to establish a factory at Mutlah or Chandernagore. They looked down on the Ghoorkas as savages, and re-

garded the heroes of Chillianwallah and Ferozeshah as a conquered race. At length in the plenitude of their pride and folly, they began to question the efficacy of the British name !”

So much for the pride of the Brahmin and of the petted, pampered, and in some instances, certainly misguided sepoy.

So all ignorant of the horrors in secret preparation for them, the poor and unsuspecting Europeans in Delhi, as elsewhere in India, went about the affairs of everyday life ; the judge attended his court, the divine his church, the merchant his office ; the clerk stuck to his desk, and the school boy to his task ; the young officer hunted and shot, danced at assemblies, flirted at promenades and the band-stand, or on the course ; played cricket, as only “the eleven of ours” could play ; made up his book on the Sonapore plate, or the Calcutta welter, and made bets of gloves with the ladies, who talked of their ayahs, their babies, their bonnets, and the latest fashions from Europe ; of the forthcoming amateur theatricals, in which they *would* cast “Still Waters” after a manner of their own, to wit : Captain Harrower as “John Mildmay ;” Lena Weston [as “Mrs. Mildmay ;” Mrs. Chili Chutney as the flirting widow Sternhold ; and Doyle of the Fusiliers as “Captain Hawksley,” and so on—and so on ; and of course,

all went deeply into the pleasures of an intended grand fancy ball, in honour of the Queen's accession to the throne ; and this was fixed to take place in June.

Alas ! ere *that* time, the boom of cannon-shot was to pass over all India, from sea to sea !

CHAPTER XIV.

WHICH TREATS OF VARIOUS MATTERS.

It was with extreme annoyance that Harrower, on the morning after the ride on the course, read the following paragraph in the *Delhi Gazette*, which had copied it from the *Bengal Hurkaru*.

“Colonel Mark Rudkin, of the Oude Irregulars, is appointed to serve on the staff of Brigadier Graves, at Delhi, until further orders. This gallant officer is already decorated with that most distinguished order the Star of St. Michael and St. George, and the Cross of the Bath.”

“Bah—what next?” muttered Jack.

“Every person possessed of common humanity must join with us in our earnest sympathy for the great sorrow and bereavement so lately endured by this most meritorious officer.”

“Bosh!” commented Jack, as he dashed the silver muffineer, with which he had been sprinkling his toast, to the further end of the bungalow;

"we all know how much editorial sympathies, regrets, or congratulations are worth ; but I hope Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Rudkin appreciates them duly."

Harrower's attempt at having a private interview with Lena Weston had begun and ended, as related.

So Rudkin had actually come to Delhi, which is more than eight hundred miles up the country from his former station ! It did not seem probable that he would traverse all that amount of distance by rail, steamer, and dawk, simply for a change of scene, and to soothe his agitated feelings ; but his arrival was the source of that presentiment of coming evil which had so oddly weighed on Jack's usually matter-of-fact mind.

Lingering over his breakfast—chicken, toast, and cold tea—he let the *Delhi Gazette* drop on the floor, and planted a foot on it, partly in spite, partly in abstraction, while gazing listlessly through the large, open windows of his bungalow to the groves of trees, beyond where the cool and strongly-defined shadow of the verandah tempered the scorching white glare, in which the far-stretching cantonments were steeped, so that they seemed to vibrate and quiver in the sunny heat ; and there, the motley-dressed sepoy, and some of his own Cornish lads, could be seen at times,

passing or hovering about the gate of the compound.

"Such a stupid life this is!" he grumbled; "this dull cantonment business and monotonous musketry practice on the Hythe system—after the Sutledge—and the past years."

He could little foresee that in a month or so hence he would have excitement enough, and to spare.

How mortifying alike to Harrower's love and his self-esteem was a sense of the influence that man seemed still to have over her, false as he had been to her; yet had not Lena a mysterious influence over Harrower, false as she had been to *him*?

She had not returned Rudkin's bow; he could remember *that*; but then her paleness, the expression of her face, the stony eyes, the rigid muscles, the abstraction which prevented her hearing the earnest words addressed to her when he took her hand in his!

"She seemed sorely bewildered, poor thing!" said Jack, mentally.

Might it not be—whispered Hope—that love had nothing to do with the marked emotion she exhibited; but indignation—pure indignation, only?

When he lifted his cap, Rudkin had seemed

bald, or nearly so; he was certainly grey about the temples, and his face had more lines in it than when he came in an evil hour to Thorpe Audley. Though he was still a distinguished and fine-looking man, five or six years had certainly made a change in his appearance.

This was consolatory to Jack—very—as he surveyed his thick, dark, curly pate, his heavy mustachios, clear bright eyes, and unwrinkled cheeks, in the mirror; but then he had not the rank, pay, and allowance of Lieutenant-Colonel, and he could not exhibit the Cross of the Bath, and the sparkling Star of St. Michael and St. George, on the somewhat tight coatee of the Cornish Light Infantry.

“Alas!” thought Jack, “poor me—poor fool! Am I actually John Trevanion Harrower, to allow such to fret me in this fashion? But how true it is, that a lover rears an edifice on sand, expanding atoms to worlds, ready at one moment to fear too much, at another fearing nothing—all hope and happiness. Anyway, his imagination runs riot, till he leaves no more to invent for his own torment or joy. . . . So this Rudkin—the sorrowing widower, has, as I predicted, shown up at last—d——n him! but I’ll not give in yet—I’ll bring Lena to book on the matter, come what may, and how it shall end, Heaven only knows!

One thing is sure, that if I fail I'll get out of Delhi, even if I should have to send in my papers."

Noon was past ere he was aware of it, and with a cigar in his mouth, and an umbrella over his head, as the sun shone hotly, he sallied forth for a lonely ramble near the Jumna, leaving his compound by a back gate.

It is the fate of boyhood to be smitten by many a puerile fancy; but his passion for Lena had been far beyond such as these. It was the first dream of his youth, certainly; but it had grown up amid the quietness of family intercourse—of constant propinquity in a secluded English country rectory; and from such a passion, a second nature, there was neither recovery nor escape.

From his reverie he was roused by finding himself on the margin of the broad and rolling Jumna, the waters of which come from a cavern of icicles in the distant Himalayas, and which are low at that season, exhibiting, where the flat-bottomed boats were not floating, great heaps of sand, and here and there a corpse or so floating down the current, with the vultures hovering over or alighting on them; a black alligator lurking in a muddy creek, half-hidden among the luxuriant undergrowth that flourished, large-

leafed and rank, amid the slime. There, too, were objects which looked like large white pebbles, and dry branches lying on the sand, or by the margin of the stream; but these Harrower knew now to be human bones and sun-bleached skulls, that might lie there till the August rains swept them into the Ganges, at Allahabad.

"Truly Ali Merdan Khan's canal for pure water was a sanatory necessity in Delhi," thought Jack, as he turned with something of loathing from this sight, all the more readily that he was annoyed by the importunities of a Fakir, or Hindoo dervish, who suddenly started up from the long grass before him.

He was one of the Gymnosophists, and was consequently destitute of clothing, and seemed more like a gorilla than a man. His person was covered with hair and dirt; his locks overhung his wild eyes in matted masses, that had never known a comb, and his nails were of enormous length.

This fellow, Gunga Rai, was one who haunted the cantonments, and was a dangerous rival to the Mahomedan dervish Falladeen, who dared not emulate him in the variety or horror of his self-imposed penances, such as sometimes sitting for many days and nights in one position, rolling his body on the earth for miles, and suspending

himself head downwards over a slow fire. He was fierce and clamorous in his demand for alms to enable him, as he pretended, to build a temple and dig a well, as an atonement for his sins, so Harrower angrily tossed a few annas to him, and hurried off.

As he made his way towards a mango-tope, or clump of trees, for coolness, he came suddenly on Mellon and Captain Douglas, who were both idling about in the same fashion as himself; but both had fowling-pieces, to shoot any game that might come within range.

"Heard the news, Harrower?" asked Douglas.

"About Rudkin's arrival—oh yes," replied the other, who at present was a man of one thought.

"Rudkin? whom—oh! you mean of the Oude Irregulars, who has come here on the staff. No—something more important than that."

"What is it?"

"I mean the news that came to Brigadier Graves this morning."

"Of what—more sepoy in revolt?"

"Exactly; the mutiny is increasing."

"Where?"

"Everywhere, apparently but we had certain unpleasant news from your old head-quarters. It would seem," said Douglas, "that on the third of this month, the 7th Oude Irregular In-

fantry refused to receive the cartridges for their Enfield rifles, and tumultuously broke their ranks, leaving the parade ground ; influenced, I doubt not, by the teaching of some Hindoo Fakirs and dancing dervishes."

"By Jove! I would hang a score or two of those filthy fellows ; and if that did not stop their work, I would try the effect of grape shot!" said Harrower.

"Sir Henry Lawrence, the Chief Commissioner, seems something of your way of thinking, for he paraded all the native troops in the station, and drew them up in front of the Cornish Light Infantry—"

"Ours !" cried Jack, with a flush of real enthusiasm.

"Yes, and a brigade of eight field pieces, which were loaded with grape ; but the sight of the lighted matches—"

"And of ours, under Inglis, I hope? "

"Proved all too much for the nerves of the Pandies, who threw down their rifles and fled in wild confusion, deserting *en masse*, to spread dissatisfaction elsewhere. So, daily, matters are looking worse."

"Greased cartridges, indeed—the idea of the thing!" said Mellon, coaxing, to their utmost length, his long fair whiskers ; "by Jove! Jack,

those donkeys of Brahmins and Rajpoots think themselves irretrievably degraded in this world, and damned in that to come, if they polish a boot or cook a beefsteak; and, doubtless, Windsor soap and Dutch butter have certain diabolical tendencies in them as well."

"Ripley tells me," added Captain Douglas, that the 54th have already begun to show a contempt for their European officers, by coming into the bungalows with their shakoes off, and their shoes *on*. If this kind of spirit spreads, ere long, our Indian regiments will become mere ropes of sand, to use an old military phrase."

"Let it come to the musket, then, speedily," said Harrower laughing, but with a bitterness which Mellon only understood, and which made Douglas raise his eyebrows with a little surprise; "good! we shall soon have other work to do, than studying the 'Army List' and the thermometer; flirting on the race-course, spearing hogs, and potting tigers, practising a new stroke at billiards, or any other approved Anglo-Indian mode of killing the breathless, broiling day."

Matters were indeed looking ill, even at Delhi. Though Jack was too pre-occupied generally to observe that the sepoy were sulky, and omitted to salute him, he began to find that Ferukh Pandey failed on some occasions to ice his wine,

on others to fill the jars for his bath ; that his syces levanted bodily with some of his stable property, and that the Hindoo Fakir, Gunga Rai (replacing the Dervish Falladeen), perched on an elephant, with a red flag displayed from the howdah, dared to preach rebellion and mutiny to the sepoys and camp-followers at the very gate of his compound, till he came forth, horsewhip in hand, on which Gunga Rai took himself off, with his huge lumbering quadruped.

Surrounded as the Fakir was by a mob of excited natives, this was a somewhat dangerous exhibition of authority on the part of Harrower, for Gunga Rai enjoyed, far and near, a wonderful reputation for sanctity ; and had been, so people *said*, buried six feet deep in the earth before the Cashmere gate of Delhi, screwed up in a coffin, the lid of which was further secured by the seals of Mirza Mogul, and Mirza Abubeker, and that he had remained there while a crop of barley was sown, grown, and reaped, above the spot where he lay ; a marvellous story in which Jack had, of course, not the slightest faith.

According to Anglo-Indian etiquette, Colonel Rudkin, on his arrival, left his card with most of the principal residents, and among others, *twice* at the house of Dr. Weston.

Of this Harrower was duly informed by his

friend, Rowley Mellon, who added that the Colonel had already taken the crape band off his left arm and sword-hilt.

"A sign that his short season of mourning is over," said Jack.

Aware that the Colonel had used his eldest daughter very ill, Dr. Weston, on receiving his card, resolved that he would not personally return his visit, or in any way seek his society; but Colonel Rudkin, he considered, had lately suffered a great calamity, and, that as a Christian clergyman, he was bound not to ignore his grief, or to bruise the bruised, and that he must say something concerning it.

So he sent his card, by the hands of his kit-mutgar,—the same precious rogue whom we have seen so lately figuring in the Delhi palace,—with "kind and earnest condolences" pencilled thereon. This was quite enough for the widower, who, after a proper interval, thought himself warranted in calling again; and hence his second visit; but oddly enough, on both occasions no one was at home but Polly, who knew enough of the story to be intensely reserved to him, and little Willie, who fairly shunned him, for the Colonel had, at times, an expression of face that children do not like.

However, Rudkin had twice lifted his hat to the sisters, when they were riding on the course,

attended by Mellon, Rivers, Eversly, and others ; Kate's return, though polite, and Lena's studiously averted face, did not invite him to join them, to speak, or even approach, till they all met at a dinner party, at the house of Mrs. Patna Rhys, who, in perfect ignorance of the past, assigned Lena to the Colonel's care, during the evening, which certainly proved the most uncomfortable she had ever spent in India.

Whatever were the Colonel's secret thoughts or ultimate intentions, the circumstance of his having seen Lena and her old lover, Harrower, riding so amicably together, and apparently without companions, on the evening he arrived in the city, made him doubtful of his ground and the strength of his position ; but Mark Rudkin was cool and wary, he could wait and watch.

Though his manner, his voice, or eye never betrayed it, the old passion of this selfish lover revived amid the charm of Lena's presence ; for though quiet and most lady-like, her mien and ways were very alluring. Somehow it seemed innate and inborn with her, that whatever she said was expressed happily, and whatever she did, was done with a singular grace, that was peculiarly her own.

Few people smile constantly ; yet it was a provoking peculiarity of the Colonel's that his mouth

always smiled, especially when his quiet, earnest, and observant grey eyes did *not*.

His beard was luxuriant and bushy ; every one who has been in a warm climate knows how fast such hirsute appendages grow ; and his mustache, which was brown, grizzled with grey, concealed effectually an upper lip, that otherwise would have been seen to be unpleasantly thin.

He was studiously and carefully polite and unmarked in his bearing to Lena, and with considerable tact and skill, spoke in very good taste of general events and occurrences, dwelling much upon the Barrackpore mutiny, all it foreshadowed, and so forth.

He contrived thus to put poor Lena tolerably at her ease, and she felt deeply thankful for one circumstance alone ; that Harrower had not been invited to the same dinner party, as his presence only would have been wanted to complete her secret confusion and annoyance.

CHAPTER XV.

HARROWER PROPOSES A SECOND TIME.

HARROWER flattered himself, however, that he had still the best of the game, in so far that he had the easy *entrée* of the Doctor's hospitable mansion as an old friend, and a welcome visitor to all; Polly invariably sprang to embrace him, and Willie clambered about his back and legs, with a confident vivacity not always pleasing after a hot ride under an Indian sun.

We may form a hundred carefully laid plans for the development of an earnestly desired scheme, and yet find them all signal failures, while unexpectedly, a happy or lucky opportunity—one beyond our fondest hopes—may suddenly be given us, by the merest chance.

So it was with Harrower. Calling one evening at the Westons', he was informed by the durwan that all the family were from home, at service in

the Doctor's church—"all except, Missee Lena, who was in the garden."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sahib, alone."

In the garden, and unattended! There he went at once in search of her. The evening was pretty far advanced now. Shorn of his beams, by a species of amber haze, the crimson Indian sun was shining almost from the very horizon, and thus the shadows of house and tree, of mosque and minaret, were thrown to a vast distance across the white sandy plain of Delhi. In a few minutes, as there is no twilight in these regions, Harrower knew it that would be absolute night, and that he had no time to lose in finding Lena among the intricacies of an Indian garden, which is always extensive and full of large shrubberies.

There were the gorgeous acacias and oleanders which shrouded the grave of little Gyp the terrier; the baubool breathing perfume from its bells; the sensitive plant spreading itself over whole borders, and so true to its name that a touch of the smallest leaf would cause the whole parterre to close and shrink up; and amid these were masses of roses, but without that sweetness of perfume, possessed by the same flowers in a European garden. Yet, what the parterres lacked in fragrance, was almost compensated by the

wonderful luxuriance of the trees and shrubbery ; the graceful arching of the date palms, and the splendour of that remarkable tree, which is covered by scentless flowers, the size of pæony roses, which, when blown in the morning are of the purest white, but gradually change as the day wears on, passing through every shade of red, till the rising moon finds them of the deepest and richest crimson.

There too, were sweet lemons, oranges, and the citron with its gorgeous blossoms and fragrant perfume, and every branch and spray were alive with birds, which had not yet retired to rest ; the brown dove with its blue breast ; the blue jay and others with gorgeous plumes and pinions of brilliant purple, yellow and scarlet ; but all as voiceless and tuneless as the ring-necked parrots and the crested sparrows, whose breasts shone like gold ; and there too, was the busy little bird who sews two leaves together with his sharp bill, and swings himself to sleep from the branch of some long creeper.

The fabled Rose Garden of Irem could scarcely surpass in beauty and luxuriance that through which Harrower made his way in search of Lena, whose figure in her light muslin dress, with a cashmere shawl thrown over her head and shoulders, he saw on a kind of terrace, which

afforded a view on one side of the Jumna, and on the other of the city with all its vast extent of flat-roofed streets, its stately public buildings, the palace of the moguls, the enormous mosque of Shah Jehan, which is built entirely of red and white marble, and is the greatest and most magnificent place of worship in India. Its gates are brass, its domes covered with thin plates of shining gold. The entire scene was one of wonderful beauty, especially as Harrower viewed it then while the full moon was rising, like a mighty shield of silver from the horizon, beyond the dark dome of Homaion's tomb, and its silent grove of giant palms, spreading her mild light over the whole sky, throwing the shadow of the Kutab Minar, the highest column known in the world, to a vast distance, forming as it does the most striking feature of that magnificent view, which embraces two cities, the old and the new, a great river, and a far extended plain.

Lena seemed absorbed in thought, in the beauty of the night or of the scenery, for she was unaware of Harrower's approach until he stood close by her side, when she gave a little nervous start, but held out at once her ungloved hand, which literally seemed snowy white, in the moonlight.

"Your step startled me," said she laughing ;

"I thought one of those huge birds from the balustrade had come down beside me," she added, pointing to the adjutants on the roof of the house, which towered up white as chunam plaster could make it, with all its great windows shining in the silver sheen. "I am alone at home—how disappointed papa and Kate will be, to say nothing of your prime favourite, Polly."

"A lovely night," said Harrower, whose heart was beating faster, perhaps, than it had ever done, even in his boyhood; "but do you not fear the dew?" he added, laying his hand lightly, but for only an instant, on her wrist.

"Oh no—that is, not yet—the sun has just set," said she, as she folded her hands in her shawl, a motion, which, slight as it was, seemed to contain something like a hint, and rather put Jack out. It only made him, however, after a moment, more resolute to tell that which was uppermost in his thoughts.

"Captain Harrower," Lena was beginning——

"*Captain* Harrower!" said he reproachfully.

"Well," she resumed, with a little confusion of manner.

"Once upon a time, you were not wont to address me thus," said he, shaking his head, and eyeing her with a sad smile.

"Well, then, Jack—Jack Harrower, if you will have it so."

"Oh, Lena, your voice sounds now more like the voice of the old time—the dear old time at Thorpe Audley!"

"I thought you had got over all that," said she, in a voice of forced calmness; "your—your —"

"What, Lena?"

"Your fancy for me, I mean."

"Oh, Lena, no, no, no! a thousand times, no!" he exclaimed impetuously; but she did not look once towards him, for her dark eyes seemed to wander over the domes and spires of Delhi, and the ruins of the old city that lay far along the river.

"I thought that by this time certainly you would no longer find any attraction in me—and—and that another——"

"No other shall ever replace your image in my breast, Lena Weston," said Jack gravely—so gravely, that his voice sounded almost stern.

In her growing confusion at the turn so suddenly taken by the conversation, Lena conceived the false idea of affecting to think that he was jesting, a great mistake with one so earnest, and so honestly serious as John Harrower.

"Tell me, please," she asked, with a little gasping laugh, "is this flirtation or romance?"

"Flirtation or romance—oh, Lena Weston," said he, rasping up the gravel with his spurred heel, "how can you speak thus—and to me?"

"One hears so much of that mock love-making among military men, and which means anything but love."

"Mock love-making," said Harrower, repeating her words again in a sorrowful, and bitter tone of voice.

"Yes," she continued, in the same manner, but growing paler, for she felt ashamed of herself.

"But Lena, do you consider that I am addressing you after the lapse of five years, and that as I loved you at home in dear England, so do I love you now?"

"Poor Jack!" said she, laying both her pretty hands upon his arm, while her earnest eyes filled with tears, "I don't deserve such love—even little Polly tells me so. My heart——"

"May it never feel the doubt and sorrow mine does now!"

"It has felt *more*, Jack."

(When that scoundrel jilted you — he was about to say, but restrained the mortifying speech, and gulped down his anger with a sigh.)

"It has never felt more love than mine for

you, Lena," said he ; " but you are shivering, my dear girl ; draw your shawl closer—take my arm, and let us walk a little."

" Harrower," said Lena, as she placed her hand through his arm, and then they slowly promenaded the terrace to and fro, " there is a writer who says—for I committed the passage to memory—'Of all the ingredients requisite to form a happy union for life, love is of all others, the most necessary. Like the sun, it not only brightens and gilds every amiable quality of the beloved object, but draws forth every latent virtue in our hearts, and excites us to become as perfect as we can, in order to merit that affection, which constitutes our true happiness.'"

" And am I to infer that you cannot love me thus ?"

" I can well and truly like you—esteem you, Jack."

" But you surely loved me once, Lena?" he urged, in a soft voice ; " love me but so again, and the mournful gap will be forgotten."

" No, Harrower—no, Jack—it cannot be."

" Why—why ?"

" When I loved you as a simple, trusting girl, you had my whole regard—my whole heart ; *now*, it is not worth your acceptance—yours of all men."

"What morbid folly is this?" he exclaimed;
 "or is it that—that you love that man still?"

Harrower's cheek flushed hot and scarlet as he said this; she shivered a little, but did not reply.

"Ah, Lena, remember the song you used to sing long ago!"

"We used to sing so many—which?" she asked, looking up at him with a sad smile.

" ' Let no one for more loves pretend,
 Than he has hearts in store;
 Love once begun should never end,
 Love *one* and love no more! "

"So sang the great Scottish Marquis two hundred years ago, and by my soul, his single verse contains the essence of all the love ditties that have been penned since the song of Solomon."

He paused for a minute, but instead of replying, she continued to walk with him in silence, with her head drooping, her long, black lashes cast down, and her pale beauty in the clear moonlight was very alluring. Jack felt that all now depended on himself, so he resumed, while pressing her soft arm against his breast, as he had often done in former times, in the pleasant green lanes at home.

"My love for you, Lena," and in spite of himself his voice trembled, "is not the heedless love

of a boy; I am now thirty years old; I have served the Queen twelve of these, and have been thrice wounded. It is the steadfast, life-long love of a man, and I hope an honest one, that I proffer you—a heart that never in thought or deed wandered from you.”

His words conveyed an unintentional reproach.

“In all that time since—since we were parted,” said Lena, scarcely knowing what to say, “you must have seen much—many changes.”

“Yet I am not changed.”

“Many faces, far excelling what you fancy mine to be,” said she, smiling in his eyes.

“None that seemed so to me, Lena—none that I could love as I have loved you.”

“Oh, Jack—what can I say! Indeed—indeed, I am not deserving of all this,” said she, covering her face with her hands.

“Lena, a reconciliation is the most tender episode of friendship; should it be less so with love?”

“No reconciliation is necessary, surely, Harrower; we did not quarrel.”

“Certainly, Lena, we did not quarrel; would to God it had only been that, for I should soon have been at your feet again; but—but——”

“I cut you to the heart—there—that is what you would say, Jack, is it not?”

How tenderly modulated was her voice !

"Let our love be again as it was in the happy old time ; that I would call a reconciliation, and all the better feelings of our hearts, all the softest emotions of our souls, will return in greater strength.—Be my wife, dear, dear Lena ! After all that has passed, will you—will you not marry me ?"

Her right hand was pressed between both of his, and his eyes were bent upon hers, with an intensely earnest, searching, and almost sad expression ; but Lena shook her head, and looking down with equal sadness, said distinctly :

"I shall never marry, Harrower."

"Never ?"

"Kate will, and Polly may, but I shall abide by my poor old papa, and be the prop of his declining years. You must have perceived how much he has failed already in this hot climate ?"

"He looks a little older, certainly ; but I have means, so let me be the other prop. I'll sell out, and we'll all go home to Cornwall—home to the pleasant little valley where my father's house stands by the base of Cadonburrow. I would rather see the grey mists from the Atlantic settling on its bare brown scalp, than behold all the splendours of this Indian landscape, for with all its dreamy luxuries, this is not *home* ; and,

dearest Lena, why should you all take root here?"

"Impossible! impossible!"

"Your father would wish to see you settled in marriage, as surely as he desires that you should, in life, survive him?"

Lena's tears were now falling very fast.

"I have long foreseen and dreaded this avowal," she began; "but I am very sensible of the honour you do me."

"Honour!—Oh, Lena, can you talk thus to me—to your own old Jack Harrower, who loves the very ground you tread on?"

"I repeat—honour," said Lena, gradually recovering her self-possession; "I deserted you in a manner that was cruel and heartless, I admit; all that you felt I was fated to feel, perhaps, in my turn. After encouraging you to hope——"

"After being solemnly engaged to me," interrupted Jack, gently putting her right.

"Well, after all that, I do not deserve your regard; and my heart, as I have said, is no longer my own."

Jack started as if a cobra had suddenly bitten the calf of his leg.

"Do you mean to say that it is *his*?" he asked, impetuously; "that man—Rudkin's?"

"No—far from it. I do not hate him—at

least, I hope not, for papa never ceases to tell us that we should never hate even those who wrong us, and spitefully use us; but be assured of this, that *I will never marry him*, even were it to save me from the most terrible death that Thugs could devise; neither can I marry you."

"And wherefore, Lena?"

"What would your chances be of happiness with a woman who has declared by her actions that she no longer loved you—that you had ceased to please her eye—her wretched wayward fancy?"

"Nay, Lena, you are over-sensitive—actually morbid in this view of yourself and of our unhappy affair. I forgive all and forget all, save that I loved you before Mark Rudkin came with his insidious tongue between us, and that I dearly love you still, and beseech you to be my wife."

"No, Jack, no. Friends we may be—nay, *must* be—the dearest and best of friends, but never husband—never wife. Hush! there is the sound of wheels! Papa and the girls have returned, and I hear Dicky Rivers laughing."

"I cannot face them all to-night, and that is flat," exclaimed Jack, in a wild and excited manner. "Lena, you are driving me mad," he added, as he pressed his lips to her cheek, and rushed away.

He got his horse at the stables from the Doctor's syces, and full of many vague and conflicting thoughts, one moment vowing that he would never look upon her face again, and the next that he would return to the attack, and never—never abandon it—he galloped back to the cantonments, every way bewildered by the unsatisfactory nature of his long-sought-for interview with Lena Weston.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, she was not quite satisfied with herself after he was gone.

She did not love Rudkin now, but the sight of his face and figure, and, more than all, the sound of his voice, had disturbed and excited a strange influence over her, filling her breast with emotions of a very mingled cast, in which anger was, perhaps, the strongest. The emotion of pique was scarcely favourable for Jack's passion; but for himself, she felt the purest esteem, the most kindly regard, and surely the simple-hearted and disinterested fellow well deserved them.

Had the Colonel not come so unexpectedly to Delhi, there is no knowing but that Jack might have won her consent after all, especially as all her family—particularly Kate and Mellon too—were in his interest; and now, when it was all past and over, when Lena reviewed the whole

interview, she felt, with humiliation, how immeasurably superior was the position of Harrower, as a lover, to her own.

"Is he sure," she thought, while Safiyah's nimble fingers braided away the masses of her dark hair for the night, "is Jack sure that it is love, and not obstinacy, which lures him after me still, for few men would forgive all that he has forgiven? Pride, and self-esteem, which is only another phase of pride, may not suffer him to desist, and the obstacles I offer may but serve to make the emotion a passion still. We know not whether love dies soonest under the cruelty or the kindness of one who is its object; any way, it cannot burn on for ever; but," continued the pretty casuist, "he must have some strange, wild hope of winning me yet, or his regard would have died out long ago. I have read, too, that the heart of man is such, that no sooner does he possess the object for which he has sighed, than he soon grows weary of it. Would Jack act thus, though?—I think not. Poor, dear Jack! his eyes had their old earnest and beautiful expression in them to-night," thought Lena, as Safiyah whisked the chowrie and drew the muslin mosquito curtain closely round the couch of her mistress.

It was not altogether that Lena Weston knew

not her own mind ; but, as some of her admissions to Harrower imported, that a morbid emotion of pride possessed her, and caused her to decline even the true and generous proffer of his old and unchanged regard.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRANGLERS.

For two days after this, Harrower never left the cantonments, but seemed to vegetate within the recesses of his bungalow.

On the evening of the second day subsequent to this unfortunate interview, Rowley Mellon was seen spurring his bay mare in hot haste towards the cantonments. What he had to communicate shall be related elsewhere; but meanwhile it must be recorded that among those who observed the heedless Mellon riding up the slope from Delhi, were some who could *not* be classed among his friends.

Prince Mirza Abubeker had said that Mellon should be taken care of, as stated in the close of our thirteenth chapter, and there were now upon his track certain men who fully meant to do so.

From a tope, or clump of mango trees that grew by the wayside, nearly a mile from the can-

tonment gate, four men were watching him with more of keen and fierce interest than good intent expressed in their black and glittering eyes, yet Rowley had never wronged one of them, and was perfectly unconscious of their existence here below.

These men were Baboo Bulli Sing, Gunga Rai—the naked Fakir,—and two other natives, one of whom was the havildar Pershad Sing and a Hindoo sowar, or dragoon of low caste, apparently, and whose features expressed only cruelty and cunning.

Neither of the latter were in uniform.

All these men were members of that nearly, but not quite exterminated society, which was so long the terror of Hindostan, the Phansigars, or hereditary stranglers—the Thugs—a set of fanatical miscreants, to crush and destroy whom, the British Government gave all its energies, shortly before the Queen's accession, and whose mode of tracking, killing, and concealing their victims, was so subtle, and so carefully planned, that prior to 1835, they are alleged to have assassinated about fifteen hundred men annually.

Though the Thugs were all Hindoos originally, caste restrictions were removed, and then many Mohammedans joined them.

Baboo Sing and Pershad Sing had both become

soldiers, and had consequently retired from the more lucrative business of Thuggee; but they still knew all the code of secret signs, which, with a strange slang like that of the Gipsies, constituted a species of free masonry, by which the members of this monstrous fraternity recognised each other, after a long and careful course of initiation by their parents.

Drawing the back of the hand across the chin, indicated the approach of a stranger; placing the hand over the mouth, and drawing it gently down, signified that danger was past; they made tracks for each other's guidance by strewing a few leaves on the wayside, by drawing a line in the dust, placing stones on each other, and by many other simple signals, which were revealed freely enough after our Government had caught and hanged a few hundreds of them. They have been known to follow, and even to travel for days, with the person they meant to slay, till an opportunity was given by chance, or, as they believed (though robbery was their chief motive), by the patroness of their order, Kalee, the Hindoo goddess of destruction—another form, it is believed, of the male idol, Seva.

She, they imagine, to have dwelt once on earth, inhabiting the sixteen stupendous granite caves of Ellora, which lie near Dowlatabad, and the

walls of which are covered with mystic sculptures, cut by the hands of demons, to record all the mysteries of Thuggee: on the opportunity being accorded, usually near some wild jungle or deep water-course, they strangled the victim with the roomal, or noose, dug a hole with a pick-axe, and covered him up, face downwards, after gashing the body deeply under the armpits, to aid decomposition; through the mode of assassination adopted by them, they always abstained from shedding blood, and hence came much of the mystery that enveloped their crimes.

They deemed the instruments of death—the handkerchief and pickaxe—as holy; the latter was forged amid many absurd rites, washed with sugared brandy-and-water, and passed seven times through the flames, and with the roomal, properly noosed, was received with reverence by the Thug, from the hands of the priest, his tutor, who was entitled to all the coin found in the pockets of his first victim; hence, at the time alluded to, Gunga Rai was probably speculating on the amount of rupees that might be in the portmonnaie of poor Rowley Mellon.

The system pursued was not unlike that of garotting, in more enlightened parts of the world. “Whilst travelling along in friendly converse, two Thugs contrive to place themselves on each

side of the traveller. One of them suddenly throws the noose over the neck of the victim, holding one end, while his accomplice grasps the other. A third, in readiness behind, seizes him by the legs ; he is then thrown down and disabled, while the operation of the noose is aided by kicks in the most vital parts of the body. The sacred pickaxe is then called into play, and a hole, three feet deep, receives the victim, face downwards."

Persons of less doubtful character than Baboo Sing were members of this remarkable community, which had among its brotherhood such men as Dunraj Seth, the great Bombay banker, and his agent, Bearee Lall, who had in his office and about his person no less than twelve initiated Thugs. These, however, were sleeping partners, who merely vested money in the cause of murder and robbery, and did so with a coolness that may find a parallel to a certain extent in some of the great commercial rascalities of the western world.

In this awful trade did the Thugs rear their children and initiate their wives, reducing the whole horror to a system, a science, till by them murder came to be "considered as one of the Fine Arts," to quote the title of De Quincy's famous essay.

"Safe in the cantonments!" exclaimed Sergeant Pershad Sing, striking his hands together,

as Mellon rode in, receiving a salute from a sentinel of the 54th N. I. at the gate.

"Yes—safe by the nine forms of Vishnu!" added Gunga Rai, whose eyes glared through the uncombed masses of his hair, as he drew (but with difficulty, for his nails, that had never known trimming, were like the shells of a razor-fish) from his dirty cummerbund, or shawl, that was twisted round his middle, and formed his only garment, the *roomal*, or slip-knot handkerchief, and gave it to Pershad Sing, who knelt down to receive it; "he is safe yonder, and cannot leave unseen by us, if we but stay long enough. May Kalee vouchsafe her aid and support to you, and may she and you remember in the moment of sacrifice how many of your forefathers signalised themselves by the use of THIS, and by their courage and conduct in her service, and for her glory. But she does not forget it, for have not her signs and auguries been most auspicious? We are a poor, crushed, and degraded community now; once we who could number our men by thousands, now cannot do so even by scores, and even these are old, feeble-handed, and faint of heart. Why is this? neglect of the observances of religion; all manner of men were made Thugs, and all manner of men were killed, without consideration of whether their touch in death made our

hands unclean, so Kalee began to forget us, when we forgot her; but amid solemn prayer I have seen her, and heard the whispers of her voice, and be assured, oh Pershad Sing, and thou too, Shumshoodeen Khan, that the omens are of success for the coming sacrifice, and this man shall die, as others have died, for the glory of the goddess, who dwells unseen amid the rock-hewn temples of Ellora."

During this rhapsody Pershad Sing pressed the handkerchief to his forehead, and then concealed it in his breast.

To Shumshoodeen Khan the Fakir delivered the small sharp pickaxe, which had been concealed in the root of an old mango tree till required for use (though a holy well was the usual repository), and this benighted wretch kissed it, and prostrated himself before it, grovelling on his face among the grass.

The Hindoo trooper was a deserter from the Oude Irregulars. He was a powerfully-built man, of savage aspect; his head was small, but exhibited all the phrenological peculiarities which distinguish the skull of the Thug proper—a thirst for blood, large animal organs, and a destitution of all moral sentiments. Public taste is usually in favour of a nose; but this personage could not boast of any such ornament. A sabre

cut at Ferozeshah had sliced it clean off, hence his brown, leather visage was perfectly flat. His mouth was like that of a skate, and he had two wild and gleaming eyes, to which the muscular mutilation below lent a glare that was perfectly satanic.

"Need I remind you that Brahma is Brahma?" said the Fakir, lifting up his hands, when the trooper rose from the grass; "the great and incomprehensible being who has existed from all eternity—the *Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer*—these *are*—that *is* Brahma, Vishnu and Seva, whom we Thugs adore as Kalee. All we behold, and touch, and eat, drink or feel, are portions of Brahma—they are the souls of gods and men who have lived and died, and shall live and die again and again. Individuality is an illusion—a detached emanation of the vast universal soul, which man forgets in his separate state—that he is but a spark of the divinity, and that at death he is to be absorbed, as this night yonder pale Feringhee shall be.

"Let us adore," prayed the Fakir, "the supremacy of the Divine Sun—the godhead who illuminates all, who reproduces all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat."

So, to serve their own ends, the Fakirs of the western world can cant quite as well as their dancing brethren of the East ; but as this was a portion of the Hindoo prayer to an idol, Baboo Sing, as a Mohammedan, had some trouble in concealing his annoyance, and spat several times on the grass.

"Shumshoodeen Khan, and Havildar Pershad Sing, you understand all now," said he, impatiently, as he threw his splendid sabre under his left arm ; "Mellon Sahib means to marry a girl who is destined for the zenana of Mirza Mogul in the great time that is coming—so that marriage must not take place—you comprehend."

"All that matters little to us, if Kalee prove favourable and a sacrifice be achieved," said Pershad Sing with perfect solemnity.

"I hope he will not leave the cantonments till evening has closed," remarked Shumshoodeen Khan, whose voice sounded as if he spoke from the inside of a barrel.

"Why?"

"Why, havildar, do you speak with the tongue of a fool?" was the rough rejoinder ; "is not the way to Delhi open and full of people ; and the great Lord Judge, Leslie Sahib, with his chowkeydars* would make quick work with us, if we

* Native policemen.

were found working thus—even in the service of Kalee.”

Gunga Rai ground his teeth and said,

“The chowkeydars are with us to a man! But when the King of Roum, the Sultan of Egypt and Soubadar Major Napoleon, with the troops from Nepaul and those from Gwalior where the grave of Sufi lies, come altogether, to the rescue of Delhi and Oude, we too shall make quick work with the accursed Feringhees. It matters little—is it not written on our foreheads and in the air, that the *raj*, the rule of the Company, will soon die, and with it the last of the Christians?”

“Yes, and of Jews, Fire-worshippers and Armenians—the curse of Brahma, on them all!” added the sepoy sergeant, spitting on the grass at the name of each. The words of the speaker inflamed him, for it was such half insane and wholly cunning wanderers, as the dervish Falladeen and the fakir Gunga Rai, who constituted themselves the uncommissioned chaplains of the sepoy troops, and were the most ardent promoters of the mutiny, though the brand of discord was first lighted by some of the Bible-distributing missionaries and evangelising meddlers from a certain part of Christendom.

“Aha!” said Gunga Rai, showing a very

sharklike row of teeth, "what will the Lord Sahib Bahadoor (the Governor General) say when the bomb of destruction bursts above his head? He will then know that the goddess of time, whose temple at Calcutta, he and his people have defiled by their presence, is about to be avenged."

Leaving the Fakir and his brother stranglers in the thicket, Baboo Sing, who grew rather weary of all this, mounted his horse and rode off to the palace to report progress.

Meanwhile the evening stole on, and Mellon Sahib did not seem to be in any hurry to leave the cantonments, for at that very time he was enjoying a quiet weed and a glass of bitter beer, with his legs under Jack Harrower's mahogany.

Concealed among the long rank grass of the mango tope the three lurkers watched the gate of the camp; but though many passed out and in, the rider on the bay mare was not one of the number.

"Might he have left by another gate?" surmised Shumshoodeen Khan.

That was not likely, as he would have to return to Delhi, was the reply of the Fakir. Erelong the sun was in the west, and the shadows of the mango tope fell far across the road. The three lurkers remained patient and silent, and smoked by turns a hubble-bubble made of a hollowed cocoa nut.

lingered on the same terrace where Harrower and Lena met, watching and listening: she heard the bells beating in the cantonment and the boom of an occasional gong rise above the city hum, but there was no sound of Mellon's bay mare galloping along the roadway that led to her father's mansion.

So the hours of evening stole on, and night ere long, was at hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

MELLON'S NEWS.

PARADES were over for the day ; the evening—the cool, the delicious, the longed for evening—was at hand ; but no brother officer dropped in upon him to disturb the current of his reflections, or join him in the invariable “ weed,” so Jack Harrower sat moodily in his quarters alone, thinking over his futile interview with Lena—that interview so long sought for and so carefully considered.

Philoctetes, the son of Pœan, on his lonely isle of Lemnos, with the serpent bite in his foot, was happier, perhaps, than plain honest Jack Harrower, whose rankling sore was in his manly and generous English heart.

He thought over all she had said, and he grew more bewildered.

“ She must love that man,” he muttered ; “ she admitted, at all events, that she did *not* hate him—a doubtful admission that—deuced doubtful ;

but added that she would never marry him, and that her heart was not her own; then who the devil has it?"

He feared that he had left many things unsaid, or that he had said things that were better omitted. Had he not told her again and again that he loved and worshipped her; and what more could be said by mortal man? But she would never marry *him* or any one else. She was intensely unreasonable!

"Shall I try my luck again, like a desperate gamester, or give the matter up?" thought he.

Lena's voice and eye had proved too powerful for his resolution; even when she sought to repel him, and make him abandon the pursuit, he felt more than ever attracted towards her.

He sat under the verandah of his bungalow, with the punkah-driver asleep in a corner, and some wine, unheeded, on a table at hand. His eyes were fixed on vacancy, yet he would see, in fancy, Lena's pale face and soft expression; and silently in his heart he vowed that he would love her still. This he could do, all the more conscientiously, that she had pledged herself not only *not* to become the wife of Rudkin, but also, never to marry at all!

At her years, and with all her beauty, and the brilliant offers certain to be made her in India, would she keep that singular pledge?

He was certain that she would, and he should be constant to her. If she did not marry neither would he ; but he should remain a bachelor, stick to his profession, and redouble the interest he felt in the welfare, honour, and glory of the Cornish Light Infantry.

But he knew that he ought also to avoid her, and get out of Delhi ; his peace of mind required it. He would correspond with Kate and Polly, and he would thus hear of her welfare, her health, and happiness ; but he would cross her path no more—no, not until the hair of both had become blanched by time—not until she was long past her fortieth year, which Balzac considered the loveliest period of womanhood ; until his mustache had a decided pepper and salt hue, and then perhaps his love would have chilled down, or worn away ; for, as Jean Jacques Rousseau has it, there never was, since the world began, a pair of grey-haired lovers who sighed for each other ; and so this state of matters might all come to pass, if God spared them, when she was a shrivelled old maid, and he a gouty old fellow, creeping slowly up the list of general officers.

Jack had just nursed himself into this rather unphilosophical and very melancholy, or as he mentally phrased it, “d—ned stupid,” mood of mind, when he heard the sound of hoofs in his

stable quarter, and then of footsteps, as Rowley Mellon, his face radiant with smiles, came hurrying along under the verandah.

"Hallo, Jack! what's up? You look as moody as if the first grey hair had made its appearance in that remarkably killing mustache of yours, as Polly Weston calls it."

"You seem in wonderful spirits, anyway, Rowley," grumbled Harrower; "is the favourite horse scratched at Calcutta, or what?"

"Wonderful spirits? I should think so, and deuced good reason therefore, old fellow," said Mellon, throwing his sword on a sofa, and dragging a chair outside, whereon he languidly seated himself; "I have such news for you, Jack; I have galloped from the Cashmere gate in six minutes, two seconds, and a fraction."

"Then have a glass of wine and a biscuit, Rowley; it is all there—help yourself," said Harrower, whose heart began to flutter; had Lena relented?

"Thanks, Jack; what is this, Madeira?"

"Not a bad guess; no, it is Cabul wine; I got it from a Parsee, in Chandney Choke; the flavour is nearly the same; but, as usual, I see that confounded Pandy has left the ice-pail empty."

"It is excellent, and I'm dying of thirst; grief is a thirsty emotion, and I suppose that happiness is so too. I passed the Leslie girls as I came along;

they were driving a couple of Cabul ponies in a phaeton, with the kitmutgar behind. I don't like ladies driving ; it develops the biceps, hardens the soft hand, and gives a knowing twinkle to the eye ; besides, it does make the natives stare a bit ! ”

“ Surely it was not to tell me this that you came from Delhi, with your bay mare over foam ? ”

“ No—but to be congratulated, old fellow.”

“ On what—promotion—staff appointment—eh ? ”

“ Something better still.”

“ How—what ? ”

“ My approaching marriage.”

“ Whew,” whistled Harrower.

“ Kate and I have settled everything—quick work, isn't it, Jack ? ”

“ So soon—you surely don't mean it ? ” asked Harrower, his fine, open face growing really bright.

“ But we *do* mean it, rather,” said Rowley, dragging his long fair whiskers.

“ Then I heartily congratulate you, Rowley, for Kate Weston is a dear, good girl—quite as good as she is handsome, and I love her like a sister.”

“ She is a genuine duck, Jack ! ”

“ When does the affair come off ? ”

“ By the end of the week.”

"Sharp work! how did it all come about? By the way, I haven't seen you for two days."

"That is the reason, Jack; I've been up to the eyes in business, legal, matrimonial, and monetary."

"The last element is a good one, certainly."

"Decidedly so. My uncle has come down handsomely, and wishes, for he is in very bad health, that we should get married at once, and run down to Calcutta to see him, ere it be too late. I have seen the Brigadier—old Graves is a trump! and he agrees that I leave the company, in charge of Pat Doyle, for six months, when we shall come up country again to live with the Westons until we can look about us, whatever that may mean; so you see, we have no time to lose."

"That is pretty evident."

"You'll be groomsman, of course, old boy?"

"Well—I suppose—most happy—but," stammered Harrower, "Lena will be bride's-maid."

"Of course, and wear green garters," said Rowley, with a laugh that made Harrower wince, "she will be one of the six, all dazzling creatures, floating amid billows of white muslin. My uncle in the Opium Department, was seized suddenly by a fit of phil—phil—"

"Philoprogenitiveness;" suggested Harrower.

"Not all—how you talk, Jack; with great philanthropy, he has made solid arrangements with Dr. Weston; apart from the three thousand a year in India Stock, secured to me, when he departs to a better world (God bless him!) he has cleared off my dippings with the cursed loan bank, and repaid the three thousand rupees I owed to the Agra."

"You are a lucky fellow—but deserve it all, Mellon."

"Thanks, Jack, and in return, I wish you all success in the same way."

"And may continue to do so in vain," replied the other, moodily.

"Come—don't sigh like a Corydon—how was it we used to render Virgil—

"'Young Corydon, a hapless shepherd swain,
The fair Alexis loved; but sighed in vain;
And underneath the leafy trees, alone,
Thus to the woods and valleys made his moan.'"

"Don't jest with me, Rowley; for some time past, I have felt exactly like a fellow detailed for a forlorn hope, who eats and drinks the last rag of his kit, and penny of his pay, if there be time to do so, and who cares not a dump how the world wags, as it will all end in lead pills and saltpetre, in a few hours."

They had arranged their plan, which was very simple. If the darkness suited, Shumshoodeen Khan was to address a question to Rowley Mellon, who would stoop from his horse to listen ; Pershad Sing was then to cast the roomal over his head, and drag him from his horse into the mango tope, when the holy pickaxe would soon do the rest.

To while away the time, Gunga Rai told them the true legend of Thuggee, as it is carved in stone on the walls of rock at Dowlatabad.

"In remote and unknown ages, the world was oppressed by a gigantic and terrific demon, as the sculptures record, in the sixteen temples of Ellora, for thus at our Kailasa (paradise) are recorded all the secrets of Thuggee.

"Then came Kalee, the goddess of destruction, another form of Seva, god of terror and reproduction, who dwells amid eternal snows on the summit of the highest of the Himalayas. Oh! Brahma, Vishnu and Seva! Three in one, coeval and unlimited in power!

"To rescue the human race, Kalee cut down the demon with her sword, but from the blood of his wounds sprang others, each more terrible than himself. Thereupon Kalee created two men, to each of whom she gave a noosed handkerchief—the sacred roomal—and taught them how to strangle therewith, the whole brood of fiends, without spill-

ing one drop of their magic blood. So thus were they destroyed as the granite carvings tell us, and when the two men offered back the handkerchiefs to Kalee, she said—

“‘Keep them, my children, and to serve me, strangle men, even as ye have hitherto strangled demons.’

“So those two went forth into the world as Thugs, and were accompanied for a time by Kalee in person, for she offered to conceal the strangled, on condition that none were to observe her. But curiosity is a powerful passion, and one on looking back saw her devouring a Parsee, which so displeased her that she left to them the peril of concealing the victims themselves, hence the mutilation by the pickaxe, and burying them face downward, as this Feringhee Mellon shall lie here to-night.

“Such was the origin of Thuggee. Yet *we* do not do the deed, it is fate, and fate is Kalee, for serving whom in this world, Brahma will not punish, but rather reward us in the next.”

Poor Kate Weston is expecting Mellon for a moonlight walk in the garden, ere they separate for the night; lovers have so much to talk about—the future is all before them, and it seems one of endless joy.

The moon was shining over Delhi, and Kate

you must make a speech at the luncheon—wish us joy in a bumper—that we may grow healthy, wealthy, and wise, and that like all the wedded couples in the old story books, we may ‘live happily all the days of our lives.’ ”

“You’ll stay, Rowley, and dine with me this evening, at all events. Temple and I are honorary members of the 54th mess, but to-night I would rather have something quietly with yourself.”

“With pleasure, old fellow.”

“And now to look up that rascal Ferukh Pandi; the fellow spends half his time with the dervish Falladeen at the gate, and the other half in chaffering with dealers, and ruining me in dustoorie.”*

So Rowley Mellon, all unaware of the watchers in the mango tope, and of others of greater rank, who took a lively interest in his movements, remained in the cantonments, and had a plain dish of curried lamb and rice, with a bottle of iced Cabul wine, in Harrower’s bungalow; and while conversing pleasantly of his approaching change in life, and all his future plans, the amber-tinted evening stole away, and the purple shadows grew long and deep, by the city wall, the sandy plain, and the river side.

* Share of all purchase money, taken in secret from all dealers by native servants.

"We've been getting up no end of fallals in the trousseau way already," said Rowley, as they lingered over their wine in the cool and shady verandah; "all Chandney Choke has been ransacked, and everything ordered by double dozens and more, on the shortest notice; then there are shawls, bonnets, gloves—white, lavender, and straw-coloured; cuffs, collars, and chemisettes; by Jove, we would need a couple of commisariat elephants, or the bullocks of a gun battery to carry it all! The amount of rubbish required by those dear creatures when about to enter the holy state of matrimony, is really astonishing."

"Fire away, Rowley, it does one good to hear you. They don't mean to invite Rudkin, I hope."

"I should think not! How can you fancy such a thing? Pass over that Cawnpore case of cigars—thanks."

"One never knows what odd things may happen now-a-days," was Jack's sour response; "pass the wine, Rowley.—Rudkin! I hated that fellow in a most unchristian fashion before I saw him here, up-country, and I have hated him more cordially since; and I've had good reason, Rowley Mellon—good reason!"

(Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Rudkin was fated,

however, to be present at Kate's marriage, though the speakers could little foresee in what guise or capacity !)

"Take courage, I say, Jack ; as for Lena not leaving the dear old governor, it is to be hoped she will get over that notion, as she got over teething and the measles. It is very amiable, and all that sort of thing, no doubt, but when carried too far, may become very absurd."

"Europeans can't keep all their women-folk about them as the sepoy do ; fellows who consider their matrimonial arrangements incomplete unless their ladies go like bottled wine—twelve to the dozen—or rather like thirteen to the dozen."

"Only fancy the marital lot of a true-believer, with a dozen of darkies, and all their naked imps, when the route comes for a distant station."

"But to return to the subject, Mellon, Lena Weston is a most mysterious female—a sphynx—an enigma."

"I know that since landing in India she has refused no end of fellows—Artillerymen at Dumdum—Fusileers of ours at Barrackpore—Queen's Dragoon Guardsmen at Allahabad, and Civil Service men, too—'first chop,' so far as rupees go, and position also—for as you know, that here,

we red-coats are considered among prudent mammas, as only a *dernier resort*, or 'second chop,' for marriageable daughters; so all these refusals must be flattering to you, Jack."

"Or to Rudkin."

"Oh—oh, Jack!"

"He has more money than I, and no doubt his life is insured for double its real value."

"Now you are beginning to growl again, and I shall be off. I breakfast at seven to-morrow morning with the Westons in the verandah, after parade, so good-night, Jack; I'll look you up some time to-morrow, if Kate can spare me. Ferukh, tell the syce to take my horse to the mainguard gate—I'll meet it there."

After Mellon left Harrower, considering the scheme that was laid for him, it was a fortunate thing that he lingered on his way to the gate of the cantonments, instead of riding forth at once alone.

Vishnu, Kalee and Co., had not foreseen the temptations which might induce the happy young lieutenant of the Bengal Fusileers to linger.

In the moonlight he paused to look at some Natch girls, then on a tour through the Upper Provinces, and who were now dancing prettily before the large open windows of the mess bungalow of the 38th Native Infantry; and these

graceful creatures, in their half-transparent Persian trousers, gathered at their taper ankles by bangles of gold, at which small bells were tinkling; their jamas of wrought muslin or silver tissue, which showed their slender waists and fully developed busts, their black hair hanging down in long and spiral curls, their soft, musical voices, their Indian grace and suppleness, made them seem altogether a most attractive group, as they danced to the music of their own song, and the tap of their tambourines, amid the silver splendour of that beautiful night.

Mellon seated himself on the sill of a window for a minute, with one leg inside the mess-room, and another outside; alternately he looked at the dancing girls, wreathed in whirling mazes, and conversed with some of the 38th officers, who pressed him to join them; but he remembered his engagement with Kate, and said:

"Who's for Delhi—any of you fellows going townward? I'm just about to ride home."

"I," cried Willoughby, who was on the staff.

"And I," added Eversly, of the 54th, as they started up to accompany him.

"Now this is too bad," said a 38th man; "Eversly wants to hook it, because the salt-and-water for those who won't sing in turn, stands before him, and quite untasted, too."

"And likely to remain so," replied Eversly, as he vaulted through a window, escaping the grasp of some laughing friends, who sought to seize him.

So the three mounted, and rode forth together, passing close by the group of mango trees, where the lurking stranglers, baffled by this unexpected companionship, lay among the long grass, with their noosed handkerchief and sacred pickaxe.

Kalee—or fate—had deprived them of their opportunity, but another might yet occur, ere the waning of the moon.

The moment the three officers left the tope behind, with their horses at an easy walk, and all conversing gaily, the three Thugs, still bent on their deadly purpose, crept forth, and gliding on like shadows in the moonlight, followed them towards the city.

They saw Mellon separate from Eversly and Willoughby, not far from the palace gate; they followed him quickly as he trotted through the town, but were unable to come up with him before he reached Dr. Weston's house; they watched his meeting with Kate on the terrace—one of those freedoms of action accorded to a Christian woman, which excited wonder and contempt in their Oriental minds; they lingered till he came forth, and re-mounting his

horse, rode to his residence or lodgings, in the city; and they dogged him closely, step for step.

Amid the blaze of the moon in Chandney Choke, nothing in their fatal way could be achieved; but they knew well the geography of his house, and when and where the sahib would be asleep; for many times had the havildar been there on military duty, and many times too, had the fakir begged for alms of poor Mellon, and seldom been sent away empty handed.

Rowley neither heard nor saw them, those three dark, gliding figures. Kate's last kiss and her parting words were something to ponder on, and to dream of; and before his eyes were only floating visions of a blooming bride in white, of wedding rings and favours, cake and congratulations, of white kids and iced champagne; of a short but delicious voyage down the Ganges to Allahabad, and from thence by rail, perhaps to Calcutta; and to a honeymoon spent in a splendid villa at Garden Reach; and to himself, he kept whispering soft things of the sweet girl who was to be the partner of his fortune, and "the sewer on of his shirt buttons," as Dicky Rivers had said.

So amid such dreams of elysium, he could

little conceive the interest felt in his affairs by Brahma, Seva, and Vishnu, and by the Messieurs Gunga Rai, Pershad Sing, and the noseless Shumshooden Khan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE THUGS SUCCEEDED.

THE night was close and sultry; thus the atmosphere, combined with Harrower's Cabul wine, made Mellon unusually drowsy.

He had apartments in the city let him by Mohassan Jamsetjee, a Parsee cloth merchant, whose booth was in the adjacent bazaar. He preferred living thus to being in the cantonment, as it was nearer the house of the Westons. A double verandah surrounded the Parsee's dwelling; the first to shade the windows on the entrance floor, and the second, or upper, to serve the same purpose for those on the floor above.

The havildar knew the locality of Mellon's sleeping apartment intimately, having often brought him notes and orders from Colonel Ripley, Eversly, and others while he was yet abed; and now, when the Venetian blinds were lowered (and the wax lights extinguished) though the

windows were left partially open for air and coolness, with a grin at his two companions, he pointed out the place where their victim lay.

It was, indeed, strange that, after an intimate intercourse with India for nearly two hundred years, the British should have been so long in perfect ignorance of the existence of a secret society whose objects were so horrible. Even when Seringapatam was stormed in 1799, we knew nothing of the Thugs. Slaughter was their creed, but there were certain persons exempt, as it was deemed unlucky to assassinate them, and these were water-carriers, musicians, smiths, vendors of oil, and the maimed.

At the hour those three men now lingered in the street it was silent and deserted ; all persons in Delhi were within doors ; a houseless dog baying at the sailing moon, or a filthy jackal howling in some thicket or garden shrubbery alone broke the stillness of the night. One side of the long and vast street, the vista of which was terminated by the dome and spires of the palace, was bathed a clear, bright blaze of liquid sheen, and the other was sunk in black obscurity ; even the silver light and sombre shadow were each in their degree intense.

The wall of the house on the side where Mellon slept was involved in this species of opaque shadow,

and it facilitated the operations of the Thugs, who, after waiting a certain time, began the attempt. Pershad Sing had the fatal roomal stuffed into the breast of his chief garment, a species of cotton tunic, or white shirt, which was girt at the waist by a red sash, or shawl, and assisted by the brawny shoulders of Shumshoodeen Khan, he proceeded at once to ascend a pillar of the verandah.

But prior to this, there occurred an incident which rather disconcerted them. As Shumshoodeen handed to the Fakir the pickaxe, it dropped from his hand !

When such a thing happened, Thugs were invariably panic-stricken ; it was regarded as an evil omen, as betokening the death, within the year, of the man who dropped it, and disasters to the whole fraternity, who viewed themselves as doomed men, and even to have lost their caste.

With a vigorous effort Pershad clutched a leaden spout that ran round the verandah, and agilely writhing himself up, reached the roof thereof, and then gave a hand to Shumshoodeen Khan. He, in turn, was assisted by the naked Fakir, who kept watch in the street, and then the two while crawling along the verandah, slowly, softly, and silently as a couple of slimy reptiles, kept themselves perfectly concealed from every

chance observer, till they reached the nearest of the three windows of Mellon's apartment.

After giving a last glance at Gunga Rai, on whose bronze-like figure the silver moonlight was streaming, they became more confident, for he placed his right hand over his mouth and drew it gently down towards his breast, the Thug sign that no danger was nigh, so they crept up to the window.

Rowley had long since retired to bed, and had tucked the fine muslin mosquito curtains closely round him. His room was lofty and nearly involved in shadow, yet, by the faint rays of the night-lamp, which burned on a little marble tripod table, his figure could be distinctly seen as he lay on, but not in, the bed, clad in his silk shirt and long linen drawers, which had feet like stockings, all in one piece, the approved Indian fashion.

He was perfectly quiet and still, breathing regularly, with a pleasant smile on his lips, for perhaps he was already dreaming of the blooming Kate in her white bridal bonnet, or of the last kiss her soft lips had given him.

The night-light, though feeble, enabled the two whose dark and ominous visages and cruel, gleaming eyes appeared at the sill of the window, when they softly and silently raised a portion of the

Venetian blind, to see their way in, and arrange the mode in which their operations were to be pursued.

Mellon gave an alarming start at that moment, as if about to awake; the intruders never stirred, so he dozed off to quiet sleep again, as they thought without being heard or seen.

His night-light was a handsome affair, being a crystal vase of exquisite form, with water in its bulb, the oil above that, and the light floating daintily therein. Poor Jack Harrower, in his dingy regimental bungalow, contented himself with a piece of wick stuck through a cork, in a common tumbler; but then Rowley had the elegant Kate already to look after his little wants, and to soften the asperities of his single life, for the Weston girls came at times, to the great wonder, and even horror, of the old Parsee merchant, and tumbled all Rowley's rooms about, as young ladies often will do when let loose on a bachelor's premises; and thus the very lamp which enabled the assassins to take their plans, was a birthday gift from his intended.

Shumshooddeen Khan had left, as we have said, the sacred pickaxe with the Fakir, for they knew that unless they could bring the body forth, toss it over the verandah, and bury it face downward in the shrubbery of the Gueber's garden, the im-

plement would be useless, and he could but aid in pulling the noose, and to strangle a sleeper was wont to be the work of the novice, the pupil, the mere boy Thug, during his initiation.

First Pershad Sing, and then he, each softly and silently as cats, for they were barefoot, made their way under the Venetian blind into the apartment, and crept along the matting which covered the floor.

As usual in India, the door of the room stood open, its place being supplied by a curtain, as privacy is always secondary to air and coolness, but the circumstance made little difference to the Thugs, for if once the fatal noose was adjusted, they had no fear of Mellon uttering the faintest cry or sound to cause alarm.

Old experience and early teaching had made them too perfect in their fearful work for that to ensue.

And now one was on each side of poor Rowley Mellon's bed. Had he been awake he must have seen with astonishment those two figures, ghastly and ill-defined, through the vapour-like muslin curtains, as their hands tried to undo them and approach his head, over which he singularly enough, and fortunately for himself, placed his right hand and arm, effectually precluding, as he lay on his left side, the use of the long silk handkerchief

which Pershad Sing had now drawn from his breast, and held ready for use.

There was a pause, and through the double curtains which separated them Pershad could see Shumshooden Khan, passing a hand across his chin, signifying "danger," so he drew back. Shumshooden then introduced his hand under the fragile curtains, and touched Mellon's right cheek with the tip of a finger, softly and lightly as a fly would have done; but he did not stir. Then with a finger nail, sharpened for the purpose, he slightly pricked him in the same place, producing the sensation of a mosquito bite.

Still the Sahib never moved!

A third time they tried by similar arts to make him turn his head or move his arm; but in vain.

The two Thugs were baffled, for their usual arts proved unavailing. Approaching the foot of the bed, they were about to tickle the soles of Mellon's feet, when there was a double explosion—bang! bang! went two pistol shots; the bed was full of smoke, and Shumshooden Khan felt the crown of his head scorched, as if by a hot poker, for a ball had traversed the skin.

Though they could never have conceived it possible, Mellon had been perfectly awake all the time. A cool-headed and wary young Englishman, while boiling with anger, and not without a

sufficient emotion of alarm, he had seen them enter, and thinking they were simply native thieves, had been quietly watching them, and feigning to sleep; but the hand that was over his head, and which had baffled them, held actually in its grasp a loaded revolver.

With a shout of rage and alarm, Pershad Sing sprang through the window and vanished, carrying a great portion of a blind with him. Half-sightless by blood, and maddened by fury, the bulkier Shumshoodeen Khan was less active in his movements, and while Mellon was undoing his muslin curtains, and springing from bed, he heard him shouting as he was sliding over the verandah,

“White brute and pariah! You call me yellow nigger—ha! ha! Infidel, Feringhee and slave of a begum, who greases cartridges with the fat of pig!”

Kalee had abandoned them; the fall of the sacred pickaxe was ominously indicative of that.

When Mellon, pistol in hand, looked into the street, all was silent and still, and not a human figure, or even the shadow of one, could be seen in the far-stretching moonlit vista of Chandney Choke. His two recent visitors were running as fast as they could in search of the first water-tank or well wherein to bathe and purify them-

selves from the contamination of having touched him ; for amid their crimes, those men never forgot their religious mummery ; but when compared with Gunga Rai, the old dervish Hafiz Falladeen was a pious clergyman of sterling character.

Not a vestige of Mellon's property was touched ; even his watch, studs, rings, and purse, which lay on the toilet table, had all escaped, so he became unpleasantly convinced — although he never thought of Thugs, as it was supposed that such wretches had been effectually suppressed during Lord William Bentinck's administration—that his life, and *not* plunder, had been the primary objects of his midnight visitors. But to Mellon's English notions this seemed too incredible ; whom had he wronged, and who on the whole face of the earth could have the slightest interest or object to gain by such a transaction ?

The idea banished sleep for a considerable time, all the more that the pistol shots had roused the old fire worshipper, who came in great terror, clad in his long gown and conical hat, topping a face coloured like an over-ripe plum, and fresh from among the ladies of his zenana, to learn what all the row was about. Rowley re-loaded the revolver, and blessed his stars for the forethought which for some time past had caused him

to keep that useful implement under his pillow; and at the risk of being stifled, for his room was hot as that famous Black Hole at Calcutta, (for which the traveller may now look in vain), he closed and secured his street windows for that night, and resolved to do so in future—at least, until he and Kate, a wedded pair, turned their backs on Delhi.

When the baffled wretches reported the failure of their attempt to Baboo Bulli Sing, he, as a Thug retired from business, only expressed his astonishment that, after so bad an omen as the pickaxe falling to the ground, they could expect to have fared otherwise.

“However,” he added, “it matters little; in a few days we shall have glorious news from Meerut, Agra, and Cawnpore.”

He was a genuine Mohammedan, yet it is a curious fact in the history of those stranglers, that Kalee, though a goddess of Brahminical idolatry, was held in equal reverence by the Moslem and Hindoo Thugs, though the former must have had some difficulty in reconciling her horrible precepts to the tenor and spirit of the Koran of the Prophet.

“We must *never* kill,” said a Mohammedan Thug who was once captured by the authorities, “unless the omens are favourable, and such

favourable omens we consider as the mandates of the Deity."

On detailing the adventures of the night to Mohassan Jamsetjee, the old Parsee cloth-merchant, that little personage rather startled Rowley Mellon by announcing that from their mode of procedure, his nocturnal visitors were undoubtedly Thugs! He knew the nature of the miscreants well, and some years before had nearly fallen—as each of his three sons did—a victim to their cruelty.

His statement was this, and it certainly affords outline enough for a very terrible story, did we care to write it.

In addition to those Thugs who plied their lucrative vocation on land, were others who did so by water. Those fellows assumed the garb and guise of boatmen; they wore the whitest of turbans, the most spotless of cummerbunds; they had the most suave, happy, and pleasant manners; they had the cleanest and most gaudy of boats, and usually plied as ferrymen at the ghauts or landing-places of the most considerable towns on the Indus, the Jumna, and the Ganges.

Some of their confederates, carrying mails, bales, trunks and portmanteaus, pretended to be travellers as they assembled at the ghaut, and in this character lured others, who were really so, on board, and once there—all was over!

With his three boys, the Parsee was once proceeding to Agra with a great stock of Cashmere shawls, fine muslin, and cherry pipe-sticks, for sale, and with his bales on a hired elephant, he drew near to the famous ghaut at Etawah, which stands on the north-east side of the Jumna, fifty-two miles from Agra, and eighty-six from Cawnpore. On the road he met several jovial wayfarers, proceeding to the same place. They were very kind; they shared their food with him; one carried his youngest son, who was footsore and weary, and all urged that he should take a passage with them in a clean and pretty boat which they selected, offering to share the expense with him.

To this he gladly assented, being always pleased to save even an anna, in the way of business, so they readily assisted him to get his three boys and all his valuable bales conveyed on board. Other passengers, all of whom seemed, after a time, to know each other, and to know the boatmen too, came to join the party. The sails were spread, the oars were shipped, and the ghaut of Etawah, the most beautiful on the Jumna, with all its new villas, cantonments, and the crumbling palaces of the Omrahs, or old grandees of the Mogul dynasty, had receded far and fast astern, before the horror-stricken disciple of Zoroaster discovered that he, and his three poor sinless

boys, had been lured to destruction, and that the entire company on board were—Thugs!

Twice in his desperation and despair, he dragged the fatal roomal from his throat, and in writhing himself out of their hands, fell into the water, and diving, escaped the pistol bullets and other missiles which they sent after him. Some long weeds concealed him and he got ashore, but long before that, his three boys had been destroyed in the usual way, being strangled, stripped, and having their spines broken with the pickaxe, to prevent resuscitation.

They were then flung into the river, and he saw them float past his hiding place in the starlight, while the Thug boatmen, with their plunder, bore on to the next ghaut in search of new victims.

For many a day and night after this night's adventure, the loaded revolver was never very far from the hand of Rowley Mellon.

CHAPTER XIX.

LENA RECEIVES ANOTHER PROPOSAL.

On the evening subsequent to Mellon's unpleasant, nocturnal episode, Lena Weston was seated in the inner drawing-room, alone, at her desk, writing some notes to friends and others, concerning the approaching marriage of her sister when Colonel Rudkin's card was brought her, on a silver salver, by the kitmutgar, Assim Alee, who simply announced in his guttural voice:—

“Ek sahib.” (a gentleman.)

To retire from the room was her first thought; her next, that she must remain, as her father was from home, and Kate was out riding with Mellon; but little time was given her for reflection or for action, as the Colonel in person, appeared in the doorway, with his sun-helmet in his hand holding back the scarlet, silk curtain, which divided the rooms.

It was simply an ordinary visit; and his two

previous calls having been unreturned by her father, she felt that this was certainly somewhat of an intrusion; but the adventurous Colonel had in some way discovered that she was alone, and so he resolved to improve the opportunity.

He had left his sword and belt in the vestibule, and was simply dressed in a blue, frogged coat, with the ribbons of his two orders of knighthood, and three medals in miniature like three shillings on his left breast.

Lena looked very charming on this evening; she was dressed in a species of loose robe of the finest muslin, white striped with scarlet; the sleeves were wide, and her round white taper arms could be seen through the delicate texture. For coolness, her dark hair was all unbound and rolled in rippling and shining masses over her back and shoulders, contrasting well with her slender neck and snowy throat, which was encircled only by a narrow scarlet ribbon.

The inlaid Bombay desk at which she was writing, the coloured note paper, the gilt filigree inkbottle, the silver-tipped porcupine quill with a gold pen, the tiny table, a beautiful marble slab on a gilt pillar, all aided to make Lena a pretty and ladylike picture; and so thought Colonel Rudkin, as he approached her with a succession of bows.

Whatever emotion Lena felt, she succeeded in concealing it admirably under a calm, smiling, and well-bred exterior, as she gave her hand to the visitor, whom she could not welcome, and pointed to a chair at some distance from her own, but waited for him to speak.

"I have to apologise for disturbing you; but—but I have called twice, Miss Weston, since my arrival in Delhi, once after receiving the worthy doctor's card, I think; but have been unfortunate on each occasion in missing you all."

"Papa once thought—you know, perhaps, that he is very kindhearted—of writing to you, such a letter of condolence as a clergyman may pen, about that most painful calamity."

"Ah—at Barrackpore—yes—very kind, I am sure."

Lena bowed and Rudkin coloured.

It was, he thought, deuced unpleasant to be condoled with as a new widower, by the very lady he was hoping to address as a lover. He felt the disadvantage of this, and hastened to speak again, but of something else.

"There are flying rumours of unpleasant disturbances being likely to occur all over India. We have never been forgiven the annexation of Oude, and letters from Simlah and Umballah inform me, that the native troops are on very doubt-

ful terms with their officers ; but these things will pass away like other disagreeables," he added while running his fingers through his fine bushy beard, and smiling under his thick moustache ; though as we have elsewhere said, his mouth could laugh when his eyes did not, and a smiling lip was rather the normal expression of Rudkin's face.

He was a man of eminently distinguished appearance and bearing, tall and well-built, an inch or so less in stature than Harrower ; and sufficiently bald now to have pleased even that individual, yet he had scarcely a grey hair, save at the temples, and his beard and mustache were still such a rich curly brown, that Mellon, Eversly and other sceptics averred, "they were dipped."

His eyebrows met and were thick ; his eyes were keen, bold, restless, and at times when he felt himself, as on the present occasion, in an awkward position, they wore a decidedly unpleasant expression. In fact, he was rather beetle-browed ; his ears were large and thick, usually a bad sign and offensive to a close observer ; but his manner was singularly suave and pleasant.

The military discontents, the proposed fancy ball, the state of the thermometer, and other thoroughly local subjects having been discussed, there was a pause, during which the Colonel rose,

and coming over very deliberately to Lena, leant upon the back of her chair, and looking tenderly down upon her, said,—

“Miss Weston, or may I not in memory of past times, say Lena, you are still as beautiful and as winning as ever.”

“Colonel Rudkin,” she replied, while growing very pale, with many combined emotions, “I need scarcely inform so well-bred a man, that gross flattery is closely akin to rudeness.”

“Pardon me, I meant not that my words should be so harshly construed,” said he with a sadness of tone, which was partly real and partly assumed; “I spoke but the truth.”

“If I was ever beautiful,” she replied, while turning her shoulder and curling her lip, “I should be so still, of course; for at five and twenty one should not change much.”

“Unless one is ill-used,” he continued, taking unknown to her a handful of her rich hair between his fingers and toying with it, “and I must confess, that I used you cruelly, shamefully!”

Lena’s breath came fast and thick, those were nearly the very words of self-accusation she addressed to herself when speaking to Harrower.

“Yes, Lena, shamefully and cruelly; but—” he resumed with more emphasis than apparent feeling, “think how I was situated *then*; of my

debts, my imperilled commission, my prospects; yet oh, Lena! with all your loveliness—”

“Enough of this, Colonel Rudkin,” said she, sitting with her face averted from him, as she knew there was an unpleasant expression in it, and she trembled the while, for she thought this reference to the past, an insult alike to her, and to the poor woman to whom Rudkin had sold himself, and who was killed by his side at Barrackpore, so *recently* too! “Permit me to remark, that it is useless in you to address me as a lover, and that flattery in one pretending to be so, is mere impertinence.”

“Lena!”

“I shall thank you, Colonel Rudkin, to address me as other acquaintances do, Miss Weston.”

“But you said, impertinence!” he faltered.

“Yes, because such language, while it pretends to give one greater gifts than one possesses, seeks only to rob the hearer of real self-esteem on the other. Flattery may do in flirtation, but not in love; and I do not think, Colonel Rudkin,” she added, turning her dark and flashing eyes upon him, “that you would dream of flirting with *me*!”

“We can rarely flirt where we really love,” replied Rudkin, who could preserve his coolness of bearing and modulation of voice wonderfully;

"so I would beseech you once again, to think leniently of the unhappy past."

"I do think of the past," said she, beating the floor with a tiny foot that was unseen under her skirt.

"Will not the present undo it, Lena?"

"No."

"Will not the future?"

"No!" was the same frigid response.

He relinquished the tress of hair, and withdrew a pace.

"Alas! if neither the present—when I offer you my heart and home, at a time of threatened peril, when you may need all the protection a strong arm can give—nor the future, which we cannot foresee, will undo the past, how can you seek mercy of Heaven, when the dread hour comes?"

"How well you can talk! It is a fine thing to be able to do so, and it is an art, in which you always excelled," was the cutting reply.

Rudkin now began to get irritated, and his secret character, which had a curious mixture of natural insolence, with assumed suavity began to display itself.

"Am I then to understand—for I have heard of your refusing many offers—that you have a decided objection to marriage?"

Lena gave a little angry laugh, as she replied to this odd question.

"I do not suppose, that with all the sublime vanity of yourself, you are vain enough to think, I refused any on your account! Oh, no! my dear sir—or that I am bound further to explain my reasons to you?"

"Of course not, Miss Weston."

"But you asked a plain question—if I have a decided objection—and I say, yes."

"Why?" he drew near her again.

"I wish to be free—free as air; now do you understand?"

"Not precisely."

"Then I am at a loss how to explain myself."

"You had no objection once—"

"When you deceived me, Mark Rudkin," she replied, with a heaving breast, and sparkling but averted eye, and this display of anger made the Colonel think that he was still master of the position.

"Speak not of that time, Miss Weston—may I not call you Lena? You know all I suffered when compelled to wed another in your place; but she is at peace now—so God be with her! She was, you know, ten years older than I; and for the present—"

"For the present, and for ever, understand this, Colonel Rudkin, that I wish to be free. In marriage men and women meet unequally. You only lose a few pleasures, if indeed you lose them at all, while we become the liege subjects, it may be of an arbitrary—"

"Arbitrary?"—

"Yes, or a capricious lord; and if he has deceived one as a lover, he will be much more likely to do so as a husband, when he grows tired of the love and society of his wife. And now, to end all this most unpleasant and unprofitable conversation, Colonel Rudkin, after the deadly affront you put upon me in England, I would not marry you, were you the only European man in the whole peninsula of India! So let us part on seemly terms at least, and recur to this subject no more."

He looked at her with something of wonder and admiration, for her manner was so calm, decided, and firm; and despite his pride and mercenary spirit, he could not help loving her still, after a calculating fashion of his own; but in concluding, Lena had unluckily and most unwittingly pointed towards the door, so his angry hauteur and jealousy got the better even of his passion.

"I see how it is," said he, "and I have been a

great fool to intrude here, where I was unwelcome, and on such an errand ; but I shall relieve you of my presence, Miss Madelena Weston. I should not have forgotten that your old friend, or cast-off flame—which shall I call him ?—is up at the cantonments yonder. He has something more than his pay now, out of his old place in Cornwall, but I don't think it will do more than keep him in patent-leather boots, perfume, and hair oil."

There was now a cool insolence in the bearing of Rudkin, which greatly exasperated Lena ; but she controlled herself, and thought " how different is all this arrogance from poor Jack Harrower's earnest and modest bearing !"

" Ladies are privileged to change their minds," said the baffled Colonel, preparing to retire.

" Not more than men ; baseness and falsehood are, as *you* know well, Colonel Rudkin, peculiar to neither sex in particular."

" For Heaven's sake do not let us quarrel !" said he, still lingering, and with a sneer ; " I know well that you would have loved me as of old—if, indeed, you ever loved me at all—"

" Sir !"

" But for one reason."

" I did cease to love you ; I am not ashamed to

say that I hated you, Mark Rudkin, for by your hollow arts you stole my heart from one who loved me well; and who loves me still."

"Ah!—you are aware of that."

"But what is this 'reason' to which you are now pleased to refer?"

"Simply the presence of Captain Harrower in Delhi, whither he came, permit me to remind you, on detachment—on military duty—and *not* to see you, as I, by a self-procured staff appointment, have come."

"You are wrong, sir," said Lena, coldly and calmly, "and never were more wrong in the whole course of your life, than in thinking I have been so influenced. Captain Harrower I shall ever esteem, but never love—shall never marry! No, Mark Rudkin, of that you may be assured. But if ever I do love again, as I once loved—if ever I marry, as I know my father and sisters wish me, it shall be with John Trevanion Harrower, and not *you*, and of that you may also be assured, for the good and honest fellow loves me dearly still."

The Colonel said not another word, but bowed and retired, with his provoking and imperturbable smile.

A passion of tears, mortification, grief, and anger, conflicting with much of love for Rudkin,

with a sublime respect and esteem for Harrower, swept through Lena's heart, and bowing her face upon her hands, she leant over her desk and wept.

"And it is for such a man as this that I have trifled with, and slighted the love of one so noble and true as Jack Harrower! Oh! my God, had I always been true to him, as he has been to me, how much grief, how much mortification and bitter pride had been spared me!"

There can be no denying, we are sorry to say, that something of her former regard for Rudkin had revived on seeing him, and more especially on hearing his voice, which was certainly a very pleasing one, with a species of chord in it; and the fact of his having been slightly wounded in the scuffle with the mutineers, had inspired her with a kind of pity, rather dangerous for Jack's hopes of success.

"I will never marry Rudkin," she had freely and frankly promised to Jack and to her father; but at the same time she had somewhat rashly pledged herself never to marry Harrower!

Rudkin was perhaps her present fancy; but Rudkin's second wife she would never, never be!

He had wronged and insulted her, and she felt that too keenly; and brave and worthy Jack

Harrower deserved a wife who would give him all the wealth of her heart and love, and not one that was partly filled, and angrily too, by the image of another.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT JACK OVERHEARD.

THE anxiety, or excitement, produced by the renewal of Harrower's addresses, and the blunt or abrupt proposal made by the Colonel, which, under all their mutual circumstances, Lena considered insulting, combined with the sudden preparations for Kate's marriage to Mellon, and an approaching separation from her, for such it would virtually be, and, since their mother's death, at Thorpe Audley, the first break in their happy and contented family circle, had all a serious effect upon the health of our heroine, and on her spirit too, though she bore up bravely, and set steadily about the duties of preparing for the great event that was coming—the issue of invitations, the ordering of dresses and the wedding luncheon.

Meanwhile, Harrower at the cantonments was brooding over his late rebuff, but as he was to be

Mellon's groomsman, he suddenly remembered that he would have to make a suitable present to the bride, and as this would afford a legitimate pretence for again visiting the Westons—or moth-like fluttering about the candle—on the very evening that Rudkin made his rather remarkable proposal to Lena, he rode into Delhi, and made a tour of the shops in Chandney Choke.

There, after being somewhat bewildered by the display of shawls, the produce of Cashmere (the intercourse between which place and Delhi is constant), and those native fabrics; which are prized by ladies over all the civilized world, many of them being elaborately embroidered—the needle-work of Delhi is famous over all India—he turned his attention entirely to the jewellery.

No goldsmiths in the East have a higher reputation for taste and skill, than those of Delhi, and the most brilliant *chef d'œuvres* of the European artisan are cast into the shade by the beauty of their work. Jack was not long in selecting an entire suite of champac ornaments, so called from the flower, the petals of which are imitated in the design—a necklace, ear-pendants, brooch, and bracelets, for Kate. They were studded with pearls in blue enamel (five months' pay and contingent allowance, at one swoop!),

and they seemed a rich and suitable present for a fair young bride, as they reposed in the soft blue velvet lining of the scarlet Morocco case.

Furnished with this, a pretty ring for Polly, and, as usual, a box of bon-bons for little Willie—Jack being intensely good-natured as any curly pated Englishman of five feet eleven inches could be—he wended his way to the house of Dr. Weston.

No gong with its horrid roar announced his entrance on this occasion. The outer gate stood agape and wide open, for Kate and Mellon, on returning from their ride, had taken their horses round to the stable-yard, and the durwan was absent, for there was a marked carelessness in the conduct of all native servants now.

Harrower ascended the steps of the front door, which was also open, and unnoticed and unannounced, he proceeded through the lofty marble vestibule, without perceiving, by the Colonel's sword and belt, which lay on a side-table, that a visitor was within.

The kitmutgar, Assim Alee, suddenly appeared, and salaamed him into the outer drawing-room; Harrower gave him a card "for Miss Kate," and found himself alone.

He was about to advance towards the inner room, the windows of which he knew, commanded

a view of the extensive garden, when the deep fringe of the punkah, as it swung overhead, disordered his hair, and made him pause to arrange it at a mirror, and this simple incident, trivial as it was, saved him from a great unpleasantness, for while at the mirror, he heard voices beyond the silk curtains of the archway between the rooms, and the voices were those of Lena and a stranger—Lena and Mark Rudkin!

He stood for a moment as if rooted to the spot, and a cold perspiration started to his forehead; he trembled violently; honour and all good taste impelled him to retire at once, and softly too, for he quivered like a very aspen leaf, in dread of what he might hear, or that he might be discovered by them; but as he withdrew, he heard enough—yea, more than enough, for in reply to some remark made by Rudkin, in which he detected the sound of his own name—his name, and on that man's lips!—he heard Lena say, calmly and distinctly—

“Captain Harrower I shall ever esteem—but never love, shall never marry; no, Mark Rudkin, of that *you* may be assured!”

He hurried out, lest he might hear more. His rage, jealousy, and disgust, were all the stronger, that by his late pleasant intercourse with Lena, his old passion for her had regained all its former

strength; and now he had to retire—literally, as he felt, to “sneak” out of the house, and with that bitter assurance of hers in his ears, and in his heart, to leave her in the society of his rival, of the man who first stole her affection from him, and shattered all his hopes—the very Rudkin she had pledged herself never to marry.

What sought he there now?

In that bewildering moment of bitterness, he felt that true love was a terrible passion, and that as the Canticles have it: “Love is strong as death—jealousy cruel as the grave;” but he was compelled to gulp down the latter emotion—to grin and bear it, as the fine old days of pistols at twelve paces had passed away for ever, though certain ideas of having some hostile catastrophe, flashed vaguely on his mind, as he hurried through the vestibule, and out to the verandah.

There he met Kate, who, throwing the folds of her long riding habit of Holland linen over her left arm, held out both her hands to him, putting her head on one side, with an air of waggery and grace. The bright young blonde was looking very beautiful, and the exercise of her evening ride had brought a faint tinge to her cheek, while her charming blue English eyes were radiant with smiles and happiness.

Suddenly their expression changed, for she

saw that Harrower was deadly pale, that his air was disturbed, and that his eyes were fiery and moist.

"Are you ill, Captain Harrower? Heavens, you look as if you were about to faint!" said she, taking his hand between both of hers; "what is the matter with you?"

"A sudden sickness—a sickness of the heart, dear Kate; but I must begone."

"Why this haste—have you seen papa?"

"No."

"Or Lena, then?"

"No. These trifles are for you—this ring for my friend Polly. I would they were better worth your acceptance."

"Oh, they are indeed lovely! Oh, this is too kind of you, Jack! How can I ever thank you?" exclaimed Kate, with much more to the same purpose, expressive of girl-like rapture.

"Happen what may, be assured of this, dearest Kate, that I shall ever be your friend, and I give you and my old chum Rowley, my warmest wishes for your future happiness—my most earnest congratulations."

"Thanks, Jack."

"I was not without hope—a desperate hope, certainly," he added, in a strangely broken voice,

"that—that Lena would have renewed her engagement with me."

"Dear Jack Harrower, you don't know how we all love you!" exclaimed Kate, with her bright eyes full of tears.

"On my part, Kate, that engagement was never broken," he continued, while the heavy mustache quivered on his lip with emotion; "but all that is ended now—all is over for me!"

"You should have loved *me*, dear Jack," said Kate, playfully through her tears; "Lena is obstinate and odd in her pride, but she may change for all that; and if she does not, are ladies so scarce in India?"

"Oh, Kate, there is only one woman in the world for me, and she is Lena Weston."

At that moment they heard a step and the jingle of spurs, and Colonel Rudkin, with a rather irritated and disturbed air, fussily buckling on his sword as he went, stalked down the steps, and without observing who were under the verandah, passed through the garden gate into the street beyond.

"*He* here! so—so—that explains all," said Kate, in a tone of dejection.

It did not, however, explain all, as they were

both in perfect ignorance of the conversation which had taken place in the inner drawing-room.

Harrower pressed Kate's hand kindly, kissed her on the forehead, and without hearing a loud "hullo!"—an exclamation of mock indignation from Rowley Mellon, who was approaching, he sprang on his horse, and rode away.

By the time that Kate was made fully aware of the nature of the interview between Rudkin and Lena, and the latter had been informed of Harrower's having been in the house, Jack was galloping like a madman back to the cantonments as the evening turned into night.

Bitterness, sorrow, and fury were in his breast.

Pure love is no doubt a great means of humanizing and expanding the heart of man; but love at times becomes selfish and revengeful, and the heart feels very differently when a necessity comes for relinquishing the object so beloved. Friendship, one of the elements, certainly, of the passion, perhaps dies out, and the suggestions of pride, honour, and even of humanity are often weak when opposed to the goadings of disappointment and wounded self-esteem.

Harrower was deeply mortified, and in plain words, disgusted—intensely so, and entered his bungalow, swearing over a libation of brandy and soda-water that he would “live and die as single as an oyster!”

CHAPTER XXI.

SUSPENSE.

ABOUT this time the Fakir, Gunga Rai, promulgated in the cantonments that in a vision with which he was favoured by Brahma while he was asleep or entranced under ground, near the Cashmere gate, he had seen the body of the *last* white man swept down the Ganges to the Indian Sea, and his Mohammedan rival, the dancing Dervish Hafiz Falladeen, was not one whit behind him in his efforts to disturb the loyalty of the 38th, 54th, and 74th Native Infantry, by industriously describing the late Crimean war, or rather the wild ideas thereof, brought to the East by Baboo Bulli Sing, who had actually been in London with Azimoolah Khan, the confidential agent, despatched thither by Nana Sahib to press his unjust claim to the possessions of the dead Bajee Rao upon the British government.

Covered with diamonds and cashmere shawls,

those two fellows passed themselves off as princes in London, and were so well received in society, that when Havelock's vengeful Highlanders burst into Cawnpore, they found among the repositories of Azimoolah Khan, "letters from more than one titled English lady, couched in terms of courteous friendship," the countrywomen of those hundreds who lay slaughtered in the Fatal Well.

An excuse was wanted for revolt as the Hundredth year of Fate approached, and the greased cartridges suggested a ready one.

"These Feringhee devils," said the disseminators of treason, "have robbed us of our inheritance, and made us bondsmen. They have made our princes nought, and taken from them the fields of their fathers. They have declared apostasy from the creed of Vishnu no longer a crime, and self-sacrifice to the Goddess of Destruction no longer justifiable. Our widows are forbidden to perform the sacred rite of Suttee; they abjure their vows, and enter for a second time into the bonds of holy matrimony! The Feringhees have established schools in every village, colleges in every city, and entrap our children into Christianity. Their missionaries have declared our priests to be impostors, our gods but sticks and stones, and our most holy temples to be full of all uncleanness. They have polluted our bread with

the bone-dust of a sacred cow, and our salt with its more sacred blood. They have smeared the cartridges that we must put into our mouths with the fat of unclean animals, to despoil us of our caste. No man now dares to take a kid with impunity, an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth. Our Thugs are hung as murderers for following the profession taught them by their fathers. Their steamboats have driven our palwars off the waters of the great Gunga; their fiery cars rush over the land like demons, and now they have stretched an iron wire from Calcutta to Peshawur, to make the lightning itself carry their messages. We are but dogs in their estimation!" *

This feeling had been growing fast while on their homeward way. Baboo Sing and Azimoolah Khan passed through Constantinople when the fortune of the Crimean war was most against us, and when, amid the horrors of that terrible winter our poor soldiers were dying by thousands in camp, and trench, and hospital; and so the ex-Kitmutgar and retired Thug returned to Cawnpore and Delhi, comfortably assured of the decadence of British power everywhere!

At Meerut, Umballah, and Delhi, incendiary fires were now of frequent occurrence, and were

* Concerning all this see the U.S. Mag., 1857.

generally attributed to the sepoy, none of whom, however, could be detected in the act; and so confident were some of the European officers in the fidelity of their men, that they stoutly assigned these outrages to the bad feeling of the peasantry; but, ere long, large signal beacons began to blaze night after night upon eminences and ruins of historical significance, while the rumour went from man to man that Turkey had been betrayed by the Feringhees, with every species of oriental exaggeration; that the religion of the Prophet and the Grand Padisha was on the eve of destruction, and that nothing could save it but a general Mohammedan holy war.

On the 6th of May, about six weeks after the attempt of the 34th to revolt and murder all their officers, seven remaining companies of the corps were degraded, broken, and set adrift in presence of all the troops in and around Calcutta. For a similar crime the 19th Native Infantry were erased from the Army List; two sepoy of the 70th were transported for conspiring to attack a fort; at Umballah the incendiary acts by the end of April made up "an appalling list," and the hanging of Mungal Pandey and the Jemadar, who was a Brahmin of the highest caste, after the mutiny at Barrackpore, raised the temper of the sepoy to a fever heat, for both of those men,

though mutineers and murderers, died like resolute and exulting martyrs, shouting "*deen! deen!*" to the last.

"None can know where this unfortunate ulcer will break forth next," Harrower observed at the mess of the 54th, one evening.

"Let us hope that the worst is past," said Colonel Ripley; "I rely greatly in the power of discipline, which I remember the Duc de Rohan defines as 'habitual obedience to lawful command reduced to a science, and enabling every man to know and to do his duty, whether by the orders of a superior or the force of circumstances.'"

"I quite agree with you, Colonel," added Willoughby, like many others forgetting that after every white officer was butchered, there still remained the native officers to enforce obedience; "and if my men become refractory, I should be inclined to try the power of discipline, as Frederick the Great of Prussia proved it, on the Grenadiers of Ogilvie, a Scottish general in his service."

"Any lesson is worth having just now," said Harrower.

"Fire away, Willoughby; let us hear what Frederick did?" bawled Dicky Rivers from the lower end of the mess-table.

"He was at the palace of Potsdam, when

some of his orders, by their excessive severity, caused great discontent among the Prussian troops, so the soldiers there in garrison resolved to avail themselves of that ease and facility, with which Frederick could at all times be approached by them; and thus, a deputation of the Grenadiers of Ogilvie marched deliberately from their barracks across the great square, which lies before the palace, and halted at the porch.

"An officer in waiting—afterwards the great Field Marshal Keith, who was killed in battle by the Austrians at Hochkirchen—acquainted the king of their arrival, adding,

" 'Shall I order them back to barracks, sire, or place them under arrest?'

" 'Do neither; they have come to see me, and see me they shall; good soldiers have nothing to fear from me, and the regiment of Ogilvie is one of the finest in Prussia. I shall try on them the power of discipline!'

"Frederick hastily put on his shabby old uniform, his long jack-boots that had never known blacking, his orders of knighthood, his cocked hat, sword and sash.

" 'Sire,' urged Keith, 'will there not be an inconvenience in all this?'

" 'To whom?'

" 'To you, sire.'

“ ‘How, comrade Keith—how?’

“ ‘Discussion will lead to other deputations, and every order your majesty may issue, will be dissected and cavilled at in turn, in every guard-room and beer-shop in Prussia.’

“ ‘No matter, comrade—march the rascals in—I’ll trust to the power of discipline!’

“In they came accordingly, twenty tall and swinging fellows, all after Frederick’s own heart; but the appearance of the king dressed as if for parade, awed them unto total silence.

“ ‘*Achtung!*’ (attention), cried he drawing his sword; ‘to the right face—front!—to the left face—front!’

“These commands the deputation who were formed in line, obeyed in perfect silence, and wondering what was to follow a reception so unexpected; and so Frederick cried suddenly:—

“ ‘To the right about face—to your barracks, quick march!’

“Then, as he never gave the word ‘halt,’ they felt compelled to march on, and the old king and Marshal Keith laughed heartily as the baffled deputation disappeared within the barrack-yard, where their expectant comrades gathered round them, to hear the report of how Frederick had received their complaints.

“ ‘We have never opened our lips,’ said the

oldest grenadier, with a very crest-fallen expression.

“‘Der Teufel! did you not see the king?’ cried they.

“‘We have just left him—’

“‘Blockheads! and why did you not follow your instructions?’

“‘It was impossible.’

“‘Impossible—and why so?’

“Because when we saw old Father Frederick in his fighting coat and dirty boots, and heard his voice of command, our hearts failed us, and the—the power of discipline proved too great.’”

“But there is something in the spirit of discontent here, beyond—ah—the power of discipline,” lisped the languid Horace Eversly; “see, what may that mean, Colonel Ripley?”

Through the open windows of the mess bungalow, a great rocket was seen to ascend in a fiery arch from the very centre, apparently of the Mogul Palace, soaring into the clear but dark blue sky of the night, it burst in many brilliant sparkles, which descended like a beautiful shower of falling stars or giant diamonds, and then faded away.

And now, as if in answer thereto, a great fire suddenly shot up in the distance, away beyond the

Jumna, and it burned steadily and brightly near the tomb of Homaion, casting a lurid light on the mighty shaft of the Kutab Minar, and the stupendous stone stair of the ruined observatory, among the remains of ancient Delhi.

"These niggers are certainly up to something!" said Dicky Rivers.

"Come, come, Rivers," said Colonel Ripley, "are you so thoroughly a John Bull, that you cannot make a compromise with your national prejudices."

"I never shall make a compromise with these murdering black devils of Pandies," said the boy stoutly.

What those signals and many other similar might mean, none could correctly surmise, though all canvassed the matter long and freely before they separated for the night; but the *suspense* of such a time was terrible!

Those officers whose regiments had mutinied and been punished or dispersed, knew the worst; but none save those who have endured it, can know the dread, the aching doubt, the sickening and clamorous anxiety of the heart, suffered by those, whose corps outwardly remained faithful, and who were therefore compelled to sleep with them, in their tents among the open lines of a cantonment.

No European laid his head on the pillow with the certainty of being a live man in the morning, and none who heard the reveillez welcome the rising sun, could be assured that he, and those he loved better than himself, might see it set beyond the horizon.

"I wonder when our fellows will follow suit, or if they will actually revolt at all, they seem so quiet and orderly?" were the frequent and painful surmises, uttered in whispers.

When, over all India, the slender British force was isolated in detachments, hundreds of miles apart, how many a poor lad, thinking of home and his mother's smile, lay at night in our cantonments, awake and nervously attentive, hearing the camp *ghurries*, (or bell metal gongs on which the sentinels strike the hours), clang from time to time, and thought perhaps, that each hour so clanged, might be the last he would hear, and the signal for revolt!

And so the feverish night of expectancy would pass; the morning gun would boom from the adjacent battery, and he knew that God had permitted him to see another dawn—dared he hope for the close of another day?

Expecting "a devil of a row," as he phrased it, Harrower, like his brother officers, felt all the

misery of lying in his bungalow, dozing in the dim watches of the night, snatching forty winks of sleep, and then starting to grasp the revolver under his pillow, and to glance round fiercely and fearfully by the fitful light of the night-lamp, most probably the improvised tumbler with a little cocoa-nut oil and a cotton wick, and to wonder whether the crisis would ever come! And if it did, whether he would survive it, to see old-England, or perish at the hands of treacherous and fanatical savages, as so many good and brave and innocent Britons did elsewhere.

In such hours of anxiety, terror, agony and suspense, how miserable was the lot of those poor men, who had wives and little ones, whose lives they deemed more precious than their own!

And so, with the thermometer raising his blood to fever heat, despite all the exertions of the punkah-wallah, and the tatty-wetters, who drenched the mattings spread over the windows, Harrower would lie awake, staring at the folds in his mosquito curtains, trembling in his heart for the Westons, and thankful that at least Mellon and his bride, per the East Indian Railway, would soon be on the other side of the Calcutta Ditch.

Then he would wonder at times, as he tossed restlessly to and fro, if they were really all the same people, who had seen in England the hills and valleys, the fields and roofs over snow—actually snow; whose fingers and noses had been frost-bitten at home, whose teeth had chattered with cold; who had seen thistle-leaves on the window panes at Christmas, and the flames in the jolly old English fire of coals turn blue in the winter air—the winter whose nights are sixteen hours in length—the cold and hardy December, whose ruddy sun must be set by four o'clock.

Harrower and Temple frequently warned Sergeant Ryder and their soldiers of the Cornish Light Infantry, as also Mellon and Doyle did their detachment of the Bengal Fusileers, to be careful in keeping their arms and ammunition in order, and to be ready to rally at the alarm post on the least sign of danger, and at a moment's notice; to avoid the sutler's tents, and all intoxicating drugs and liquors, as none knew what a day or an hour might bring forth, or when the wretched handful of Europeans in India might be as completely overwhelmed, by the unnumbered millions of the natives, as if they had been cast into the Bay of Bengal!

Nor could they in particular forget, that they were up country, nine hundred miles, as a bird flies from Calcutta and the watery high way to England.

It was always surmised in Delhi, that the Native Brigade would mutiny in the night, join Baboo Bulli Sing's rabblement, and slaughter all opposed to their plans; that the scheme was gradually adjusting for a general revolt over all India; that the white women and girls had all been duly allotted or portioned, as the most 'valuable spoil to the leaders; yet the routine of military duty and of civil life went on, and all the Europeans were contented apparently, and outwardly were as happy, as people would be, each of whom had suspended overhead, by a hair, a sword like that of Damocles the flatterer.

There was a time, as old officers could remember, when it was very different, and when our countrymen in the upper provinces, were wont to be regarded with such profound humility, that the natives, on beholding one for the first time on a solitary road, or other sequestered place, have been known to throw themselves on the ground, and to cover their faces, till the white lord Sahib passed.

As Kate and Mellon's marriage day drew near,

all remained quiet in and around Delhi; and
many there were, who began to hope, and to
pray in their hearts that the time of dread and
danger was passing away.

CHAPTER XXII.

WEDDING FAVOURS.

SOME might think, perhaps, from the tenor of the last chapter, that this was scarcely a time for marrying, or giving in marriage; but the arrangements of Mellon and the Westons had been made, and as it was necessary that he should get down to Calcutta, it was all the better that Kate should accompany him—perhaps Polly too—and people are generally disposed to hope that the affairs of this life are ordered for the best.

So all the European ladies in Delhi and the adjacent cantonments had, for a short time, found plenty to talk about and to interest them in the approaching marriage, who the bridesmaids were to be, and what the bride was to wear; were Eurasians who were not married to officials to be invited; were cards to be issued, or not; would the Chaplain of the station, the Reverend Mr. Jennings, perform the ceremony, or would he

"assist," if it was performed by the Doctor in person—it was so odd to be married by one's own father, that the ladies rather thought he wouldn't ; but perhaps he would give a ball. How much had the Calcutta uncle settled on Rowley Mellon ; it was well known that Colonel Skulk, of the opium department, in presents, plunder, and perquisites, had realised a few lacs of rupees at least in Scinde and Oude. Would Mellon take a villa, or only live with the family ; the Doctor's house was a very large one, and very elegant, certainly ; but to have one's own residence was more pleasant, yet it might be a useless outlay, if Mr. Mellon—who, by the way, was only a subaltern—was suddenly recalled to head-quarters.

"That was the chief bore of the army," said Mrs. Patna Rhys, who had long ago fixed upon Rowley as a son-in-law ; "a girl was always better off with a civilian—the C. S. was the best matrimonial market after all."

Et cetera—and a great deal more to the same purpose was gossiped about, in and around the capital of the Moguls.

Kate contented herself with four bridesmaids—Lena, Polly, Flora Leslie—a dark-haired and grey-eyed Scotch girl—and Miss Patna Rhys, "a tiresome girl, in her thirties," as Pat Morris Doyle said ; "one who had worked, by the powers !

slippers and smoking-caps for every eligible man in the station, and without any fatal result, as she had never succeeded in making any fellow jealous, which is half the game with Berlin-wool work."

Polly was in a prodigious flutter of excitement; all the arrangements had to be made so suddenly, that she flew incessantly to and fro between her own house and the Leslie's, and the great palatial villa of Colonel Rhys, the commissioner, about ribbons, flowers and laces, gloves, sashes, and bonnets; for next to figuring at the altar herself, it is a young girl's greatest glory to see her friends go through the pleasant ordeal; and to form an item, a unit on the occasion, more especially to act the important part of bridesmaid, is delightfully flattering in the hope it affords of ere long appearing at the same place, in a less subaltern capacity; so that bright Hebe, Polly, was up to the very eyes in bustle, excitement, and business, we may be assured!

No expense had been spared on the wedding luncheon, and the fruit bazaars had been ransacked by the kitmutgar for dainties of a better kind than those furnished by the country around Delhi, where the mangoes taste of furniture oil, the apples are without flavour, the guava and banana are worthless, though peaches and melons

are abundant, and good; so the kitmutgar—marvelling the while, perhaps, as to *who* might enjoy the feast—provided the plums of Bokhara, figs of Candahar, and pears from Peshawur, all wonderfully and deliciously preserved in sugar, and folded in tissue paper.

The pair, when wedded, were first to go to Meerut, thirty-four miles from Delhi, a queer and quaint old town, but a pleasant military quarter; and so inexorable time at last brought round the morning of the 11th of May—Kate Weston's wedding day.

Over-night Mellon had partaken of his farewell dinner as a bachelor, with the jolly fellows of the 54th mess, and had favoured them—pretty close on morning gun-fire—with his ditty of the "Bengal Fusileers." He had fully explained to Harrower the tenor of Rudkin's interview with Lena, assuring him that all was over between them for ever; but still the ill-omened sentence haunted Jack, even when he tried to be lively, and to con over the speeches he would have to make on the forthcoming auspicious occasion, and strove to store his memory with choice scraps from Byron, Moore, and Shelley, for the behoof of the bridesmaids.

Marriages in India usually take place at the somewhat uncanonical hour of five P.M.; but

Kate's was announced for half-past three; so as Mellon was hovering about the Westons', Jack Harrower was left all day to himself; but as the eventful hour drew near, aware that he would soon be in Lena's society, and in a rather official capacity, though his heart was heavy, Jack made a careful toilet of his full uniform. There was much extra care bestowed on the mustache and his curly dark hair, which grew so thick that he had to tug at it with both hands on the comb ere he proceeded to part it, and rasp away at the back division with a couple of ivory-handled brushes.

When Harrower put on his handsome Light Infantry uniform, with its white facings, gold lace and epaulettes, the broad pipe-clayed shoulder belt, with its sparkling plate, that bore all the regimental honours from "Roleia" to "Goojerat"—a very different style of uniform from that worn now by our line officers, who look like police or penny-postmen with their trumpery collar-badges—he could very little foresee all that was to happen before he doffed those gay trappings again.

Marriages are all so much alike, that we shall refrain from afflicting the reader with any elaborate detail of Kate Weston's, and yet there are

certain portions of the narrative that cannot be omitted.

The company assembled in the Doctor's church, a somewhat plain edifice, built of brick, whitened over with chunam, the lofty and arched windows being all shaded pleasantly by green Venetian blinds, and broad impending eaves.

The worthy old Doctor was in full canonicals, to perform the ceremony himself, "assisted" by the Chaplain of the station, while many a carriage and pair—turns-out that were unexceptionable—with phaetons, even palanquins, buggies from the cantonments, and saddle-horses from the same place, crowded all the street without, for many officers of the garrison who were not invited came, like the Eurasian girls and others, to look on, filling up the pews and galleries of the church; for the three daughters of the Reverend Doctor were the most conspicuous girls in European society at Delhi.

A great rabble of natives, chiefly Mohammedan and Hindoo beggars, were collected outside, jeering, jabbering, and performing strange antics, while peering mockingly, at times, into "the temple of padre Weston Sahib, where the Feringhee women sat among the Feringhee men—and oh, Allah! (or Vishnu!) with their necks and bosoms uncovered!"

To depict that motley crowd would require the pencil of a Leech, with, as Rowley Mellon said, "no end of coloured illustrations;" and meanwhile, under a verandah close by, the band of the 54th, especially the white musicians and drummers thereof, were getting up a little music suitable to the occasion; and as the company continued to arrive, a small choir, whose roost was in the gallery, were attuning their pipes prior to attempting Mendelsohn's wedding march.

"As to music being the food of love, Jack Harrower, is all very well, or was so in Shakespeare's time, I suppose," whispered Dicky Rivers; "but a marriage ceremony is always a dismal business, and I don't care how soon all this is over, and we are attacking the cold fowl and iced champagne, exploding the crackers, and listening to the speech you'll make when proposing, or returning thanks, for the health of the bridesmaids."

Not a shade of nervousness or nonsense could be traced in the bearing of Rowley Mellon, who was accurately attired in the trappings of the Royal Bengal Fusileers, who gained their blue facings on the field of Plassey. Douglas and Willoughby were there, and indeed, there were so many uniforms of all kinds present, that the church looked quite gay; but Harrower's mind

was wandering away at times, to the old English fane at Thorpe Audley, with its dark oak pews, its quaint arches, altar-tombs, and stained glass windows.

"Jack," whispered Mellon, "after we—the happy couple are gone—for Heaven's sake try and be jollier to-night, than you look just now. That deadly-lively, sun-baked Briton, Eversly, of the 54th, and many others, will be at the Doctor's ball, but you will be quite the Pan of the Dairy—a groomsman is fair game for the girls. You will meet no end of people to-night—in fact, all the feasible Europeans—the Staff, the Civil Service, and their wives and daughters, doing 'the light fantastic,' in our honour—so Jack, do be jolly—flirt and make love right and left, or try your luck again with Lena."

But Harrower shook his head, and partly to change the subject (while feeling the boredom of Mellon and himself being stared at by every eye in the church, as the bride had not arrived), he said with earnestness :

"From my heart I wish you joy, Mellon ; you are marrying when youth and love are in the flush——"

"Jack, you are becoming quite sententious !"

"I have read somewhere that 'if men intend to marry, let them marry young; while the poetry of youth is strong, then buy your wedding-rings and satin waistcoats.'"

"But you, Jack——"

"I was thirty last month, Rowley, and like the monkey who has seen the world, I have gained experience."

"Yet I would advise you to ask Lena again."

"Again?" said Jack, starting.

"Yes, again," urged Mellon, while twirling the tassels of his sash, and looking up at the clock in the gallery, where its hands seemed to stand still, but indicated a quarter past three. "Try, and if she refuses you——"

"Well, what then?"

"May she do penance in her fortieth year, with a terrier to console her, her hair in crackers—or curl-papers—and a cherry-tipped nose, that might tempt the sparrows to nibble at it."

A great hubbub outside, and the arrival of a carriage at that moment, made Mellon start, and twirl the tassels of his sash more vigorously than ever—a famous military resource in times of dubiety or vacancy.

But still the arrival was *not* the bride, it

was only the Brigadier, old General Graves, who came in with his aide-de-camp, both in full puff, and each with his cocked hat under his arm.

But anon there came other two carriages, and through the open doors, Mellon could see what seemed to be a mass of snowy white foam, rolling up the passage, as Kate came, in her bridal attire, wreathed with white flowers, and wearing Harrower's suite of champac and pearls, her veil flowing behind her, and looking as only a beautiful young English blonde can look, on her wedding day. Pale, calm, composed, but noticing no one, she leant on the arm of her white-haired father, who, feeling that he was now about to lose her for ever, was perhaps the more nervous of the two, for his hand trembled as it grasped the Book of Common Prayer, that was half hidden by the loose, wide sleeve of his surplice, to the skirt of which little Willie, the orphan child, was clinging.

Behind came the four bridesmaids, their dresses all rustling together, a sea of white satin and the richest lace, and ere Mellon knew very well where he was, or what it was all about, he found Kate by his side, the Doctor before him, with his book open, commencing the prayers,

while the Chaplain of the station, the Reverend Mr. Jennings, made the responses.

Harrower stood beside his friend, and, as his eye wandered over the marriage group, to settle on the downcast face of Lena, who occupied near her sister, the same position that he held near Mellon, he thought to himself, that artists might talk and twaddle about light and shade, and colour; but that ladies, as a general rule, knew more about the study of true effect, than all the Royal Academy of England.

Lena, who, but for the absence of wreath and veil, looked most alluringly like a lovely dark haired bride, had her neck encircled by a slender gold chain, to which was attached a pearl locket that Harrower had given her long ago; and on this day, he was secretly charmed to see it again on her breast, where, at each deep respiration, for she was much moved, it dipped down out of sight, between the boddice and the snowy bosom; yet in his outward bearing, Jack was ice-calm, cold, and dignified, as he thought, and still he felt himself somewhat of "a gaby" for acting so, while Lena, who knew not precisely how much he had overheard or misconstrued, of that unfortunate interview, was pained to perceive this, and that there was actually a hard expression in his eye, when it met hers.

Even amid the solemnity of the marriage ceremony, and just before the consecration of the ring, Polly could not help whispering to Rivers,

"How do I look, Dicky?"

Dicky could only sigh with admiration.

"Enchanting, I suppose?" resumed the incorrigible Polly; "but just as I was going to the carriage, the horrible punkah blew all my hair out of order!"

Dicky looked at the masses that fell in silky ripples round Polly's beautiful face, and they were golden as the bullion of his own new epaulettes in the sunshine.

"Here Dicky—button my glove," she whispered next; "quick—oh what a muff you are—your fingers are all thumbs!"

The button proved a little obstinate, or the Ensign's eyes wandered from it up the snowy little arm, so the operation was a protracted one, and caused Doyle to whisper to Eversly,

"I believe, on my conscience, Horace, that girl would flirt with Baboo Sing, or Bluebeard himself, to keep her hand in practice."

A loud noise among the natives outside, made several eyes turn to the door, just at that important part of the service, when Mellon placed the little golden hoop on the slender third finger

of Kate's white, tremulous hand, and they and all around them knelt down.

"Let us pray," said Doctor Weston, in a clear, calm, and earnest voice, and as he proceeded with the invocation prescribed by the canons of the church, so intent were all, that none save Brigadier Graves, Douglas, and one or two others, perceived the sudden entrance of two officers, in their frogged, undress surtouts and forage caps.

One was Colonel Rudkin ; the other, a perfect stranger. Both were very pale, and the latter had two bloody handkerchiefs bound with haste, apparently, round his bridle arm, which seemed to hang powerlessly and painfully by his side.

Perceiving that the ceremony was not yet concluded, they drew back a little way, whispered together gravely and earnestly behind their caps, and paused with a certain air of undisguised anxiety, and the irresolution natural to well-bred men, at such a solemn juncture ; and so they waited till the last words of the beautiful service of the Church of England for the solemnization of matrimony were uttered ; and then, when the Doctor closing his book, pressed it to his breast and closed his eyes in mental prayer, while Kate in a flood of tears and all palpitation, was embraced by her sisters, and all the ladies flocked round, to shower their kisses and congratulations

on her as "Mrs. Mellon," the two ominous visitors drew near Brigadier Graves, and spoke to him in anxious whispers, and while they proceeded he started and visibly changed colour.

Just as Rudkin caught Harrower's hostile eye, Polly seized his arm, saying :—

"Remember, Captain Harrower, you are to dance the first waltz with me to-night—I have written your name upon my card."

"With pleasure, Polly, dear; but why—"

"To reward you for that most beautiful ring you gave me, and because I wish to make Dicky Rivers—oh *so* jealous."

"Dicky Rivers will never be jealous of me."

"How so?"

"He thinks me quite a fogie."

"No—he does not; wait until he sees your arm round my waist—though it might go twice round, it is so long—"

"And your pretty waist is so slender, Polly! But what is the matter—is there a fire, a row among the Pandies, or what? Everybody seems to be stricken with consternation."

A pale and agitated crowd of ladies and gentlemen was now flocking round the General, who exclaimed in an excited manner :—

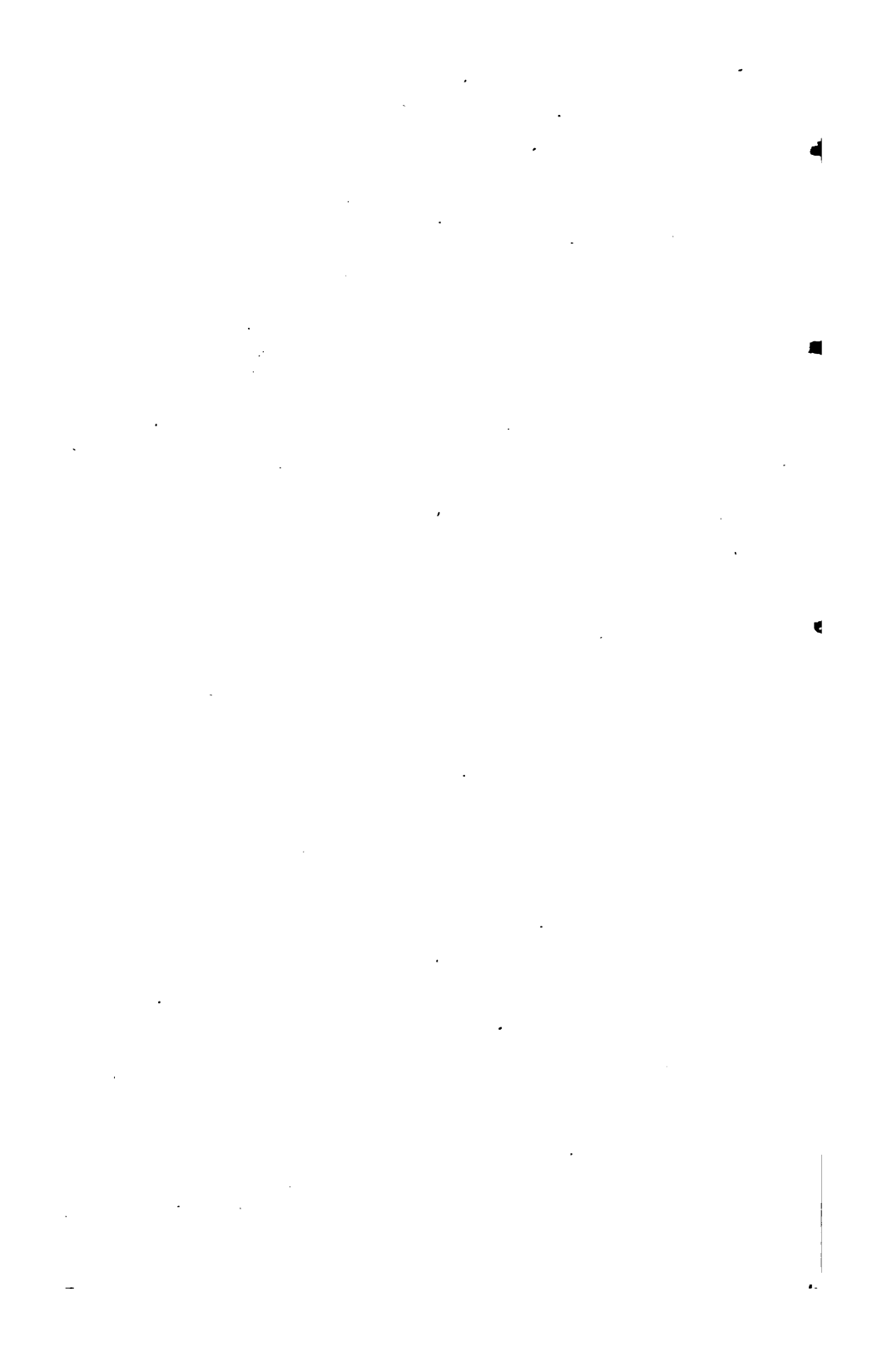
"To the cantonments, gentlemen—away, without the delay of a moment, and get your men

under arms ! The native troops at Meerut, have revolted—murdered all their officers, and every Christian they could lay hands on—and are now within an hour's march of Delhi !

“ My children—oh my children !” exclaimed Dr. Weston ; “ what horrors may be in store for you ! God help you and protect you. I am but a feeble old man. A little time, you may all be, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but shall be as the angels are !”

And like many a parent who heard him, the poor man wrung his hands in agony of spirit.

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